Itihasa 7

Wakako Mizuki

Help... somebody...
Stop me...
Help... somebody...
...anybody...

Itihasa

Part II: A Person Bearing a Divine Name

Early in the morning...

My hair knows his hands well. They effortlessly comb out my easily tangled hair. His stupid hands, my stupid hair. It's times like these when the knots come undone too easily. His hair is beautiful, swaying in the morning haze. His stupid, beautiful hair. My hands do not know his hair.

Recap & Main Characters

<Part i>As foretold by an oracle two generations ago, the gods that can be seen—divided into the warring demigods and demon gods—have traveled to this once-peaceful island, and the kind-hearted tribes who worship the gods that cannot be seen have become embroiled in their war. Toko's tribe is attacked by the Kiyu Faction, a group of demon gods under Kiyu the Silver Horned God.

After escaping the attack while in the mountains looking for a yang stone, Takaya, Toko and Aohiko meet the demigod Risson, God of the True Law, and his warriors (including Katsura and Ichirota). The three decide to join the group in its pursuit of the demon gods.

One day, Takaya is badly injured and near death. To save him, Toko chants a mantra that transfers her own lifeforce to him. As a result, Toko herself is left in serious condition. As she hovers between life and death, another Toko (?) appears and guides her towards life. Her other self tells her that they are fated to kill each other when they meet again.

Katsura falls in love with Aohiko. However, conscious of the dark fate that will swallow him up in a few years' time, Aohiko is unable to accept her feelings. On hearing this, Katsura privately vows to hide her feelings and protect Aohiko for as long as she lives.

One day, over seven years later, a hermit named Misen looks into Toko's past. Toko learns she has a twin who was kidnapped as a child and turned into one of Kiyu's warriors. Takaya is kind as ever to Toko in her state of shock, unaware that she has come to love him as more than just a brother. One day, shaken by the appearance of a woman named Kiriko, Toko confesses her feelings to Takaya, creating a rift between the two. However, when Kiriko dies of an illness, Toko resolves to make a fresh start as Takaya's little sister.

<Part ii>While Toko and Takaya are away from the demigod camp, it is completely surrounded by demon-god warriors. Takaya leaves Toko out of harm's way and enters the battle. Meanwhile, Koma and the youth group attempt to escape. However, demon-god warriors, including Toko's twin Yoko, lie in wait for them. Toko arrives on the scene as if called there by Yoko and is run through by a crazed Yoko's spear.

Toko (Yoko)

When Yoko sees Takaya receive apparently fatal wounds in the battle, she faints. Yoko starts recalling memories that can't be hers and becomes convinced that she is Toko.

After arriving in Isana, Aohiko learns that his friends have all been killed. Takaya is revived through the power of the demigod Kiyora, Goddess of Mt. Meru. Believing that Toko is dead, he swears vengeance on the demon gods.

Takaya

Yoko, with the soul of Toko inside her, finds Takaya and insists that she is Toko. Although Takaya does not believe her at first, he is convinced that her soul is indeed Toko's when he hears her sing a lullaby only Toko would know. He asks her to go with him to the land of Isana where Aohiko and the others are waiting for them, but Yoko is concerned about Kai and returns to Kiyu's army.

Meanwhile, Aohiko says goodbye to Katsura and proceeds alone towards Kiyu's army to defeat the enemy. The yin stone mantra proves too powerful, however, and he faints. Takaya attacks Kiyu's army in an attempt to rescue him, but Aohiko is carried away. One day after bemoaning his own powerlessness, Takaya notices something unusual. Lumps on his back suddenly split open, and wings start to grow out of them. As Takaya winces in pain, Kai concludes that Takaya is a Mamana like him and predicts that Takaya will die, based on intuition. Believing he is the cause of a sudden earthquake, Takaya asks Katsura to kill him. At her wits' end, Katsura is about to take his life when Risson appears and saves him.

Now a captive of Kiyu, Aohiko lies on the verge of death. Fearing for Aohiko's safety, Yoko (with the soul of Toko) devises a plan to get Kyoji to protect him. She then reaches out to Aohiko and watches for an opportunity for them to escape.

One day, Hibiki and the others in their party are attacked by thieves. And Toko's arm is wounded...!

Ichirota

Katsura

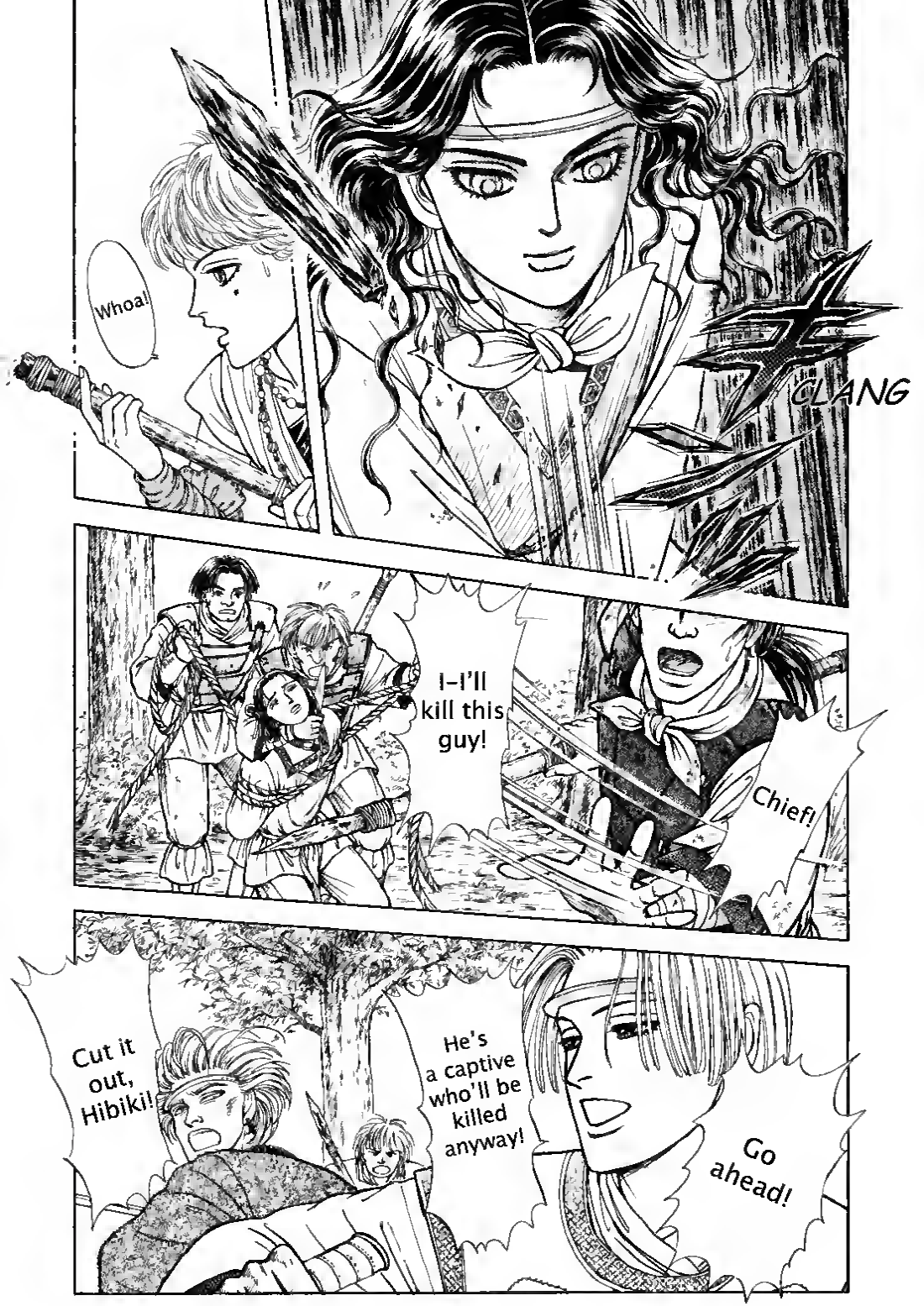
Aohiko

Mantra: a mysterious spell received from the gods that cannot be seen.

"Yin stone": a special stone that has negative energy. Its power is manifested through the use of mantras.
Demon headband: a headband Kiyu places on his demon-god warriors. When these warriors are wounded, they go berserk.'

I don't take pity on women or children.
He-heh!
You'll regret it when she kills you.
The normal Yoko would have taken pity on them.

Sorry, but Kimika makes it a rule...
...to never regret anything!
VWOOSH
TAK
FWOOSH


Whoa!
CLANG
I-I'll kill this guy!
Chief!
Cut it out, Hibiki!
He's a captive who'll be killed anyway!
Go ahead!

If you kill him, I'll eat you raw like Sashimi!
Wh- which is it?
Uh...
You guys really are low.
You're gang-ing up on her?
Show us a good time!
HEHE HE
Hey cutie, it's our turn.
Let's capture her alive!

FFT
AH-HH!
RAAH!
FWIP
HYAH!
GAH!

PLUCK
Poi-son!?
It's got enough poison to kill a bear.
Oops!
TEE HEE
There's a blow dart in your neck!
You okay, Aohiko!?
GAH!
I can die now ... Oo.
PTOÒ
A-Ao ...

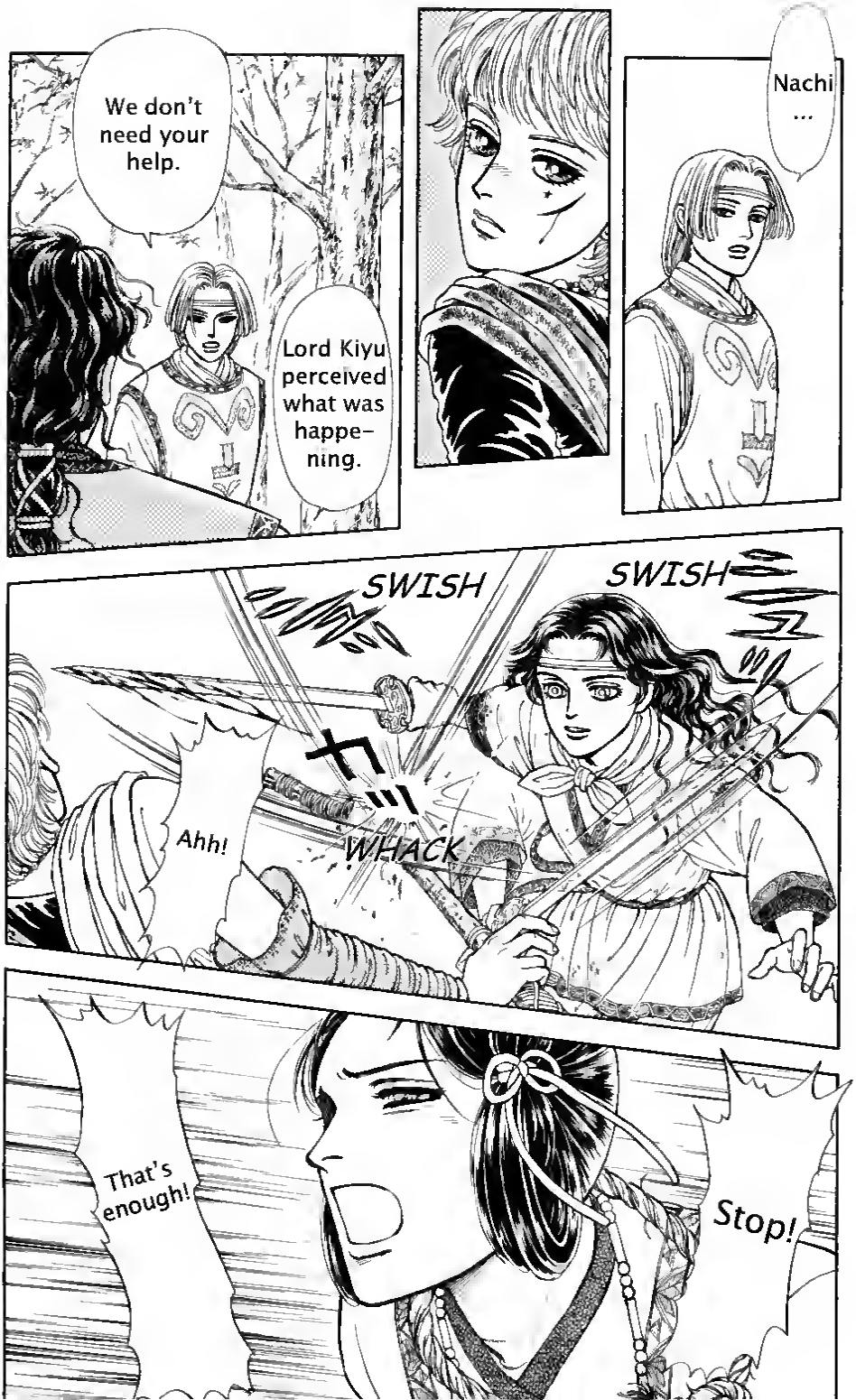
THUD
Kyoji!
HAH!
WHACK

Toko!
Damn!
We're not dropping anything!
Don't drop your guard!
CLANG CLANG
Whoa-a!?
CLANG

Stop Yoko!
Stop her!
SWISH
SLASH
CLANG
SLICE
Get out of here!
Run!

Yoko!
Stop!
Not until she kills everyone she regards as an enemy.
No one can stop Yoko now.
Cowards!
Chief, we're out of here!

Hmph! You can't be a thief if you're not willing to risk your life!
CLANG
SLASH
AH-HH!
Augh!


We don't need your help.
Lord Kiyu perceived what was happe-ning.
Nachi ...
SWISH
SWISH
Ahh!
WHACK
That's enough!
Stop!

I said stop!
Stop!
SHING
Toko!

Toko...

Ah...
CLATTER

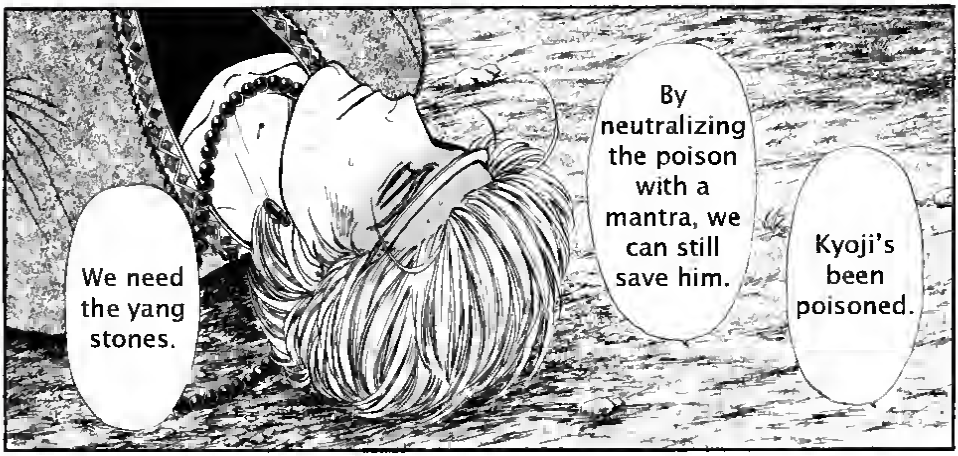
Yoko!?
No...
Don't look ...!
Don't look at me!

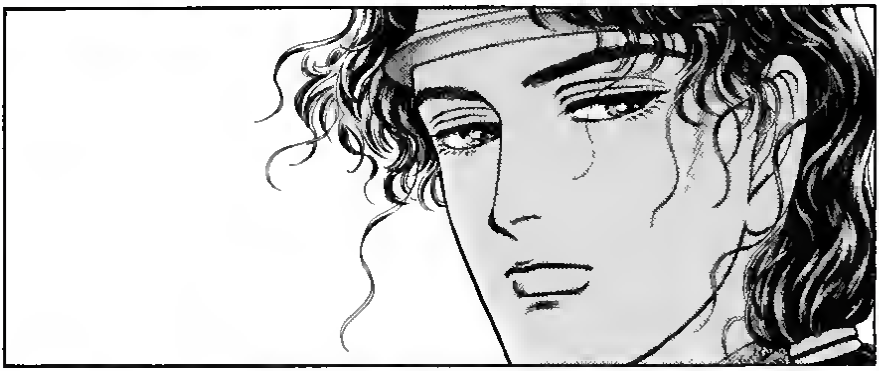
Yoko!
What just happe-ned...?
Toko...

I said, what just happened!?
If that's "Toko"...
Answer me!
What a violent guy.
Run far away...
Run, Toko!
Toko ...!?

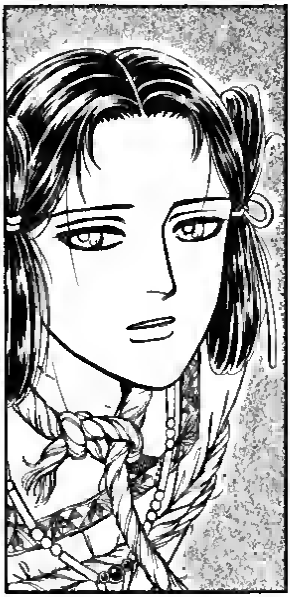
HMPH!
Get over here if you don't want to be impaled on my sword!
GULP
Not so fast, woman!
KACHIK
But if it's Yoko, she might keep running.
If that was Toko, she won't leave Aohiko behind.
What are you going to do with that wench?
He saved her himself. He doesn't want her to die.
If we keep this woman alive, she can take Yoko's place.

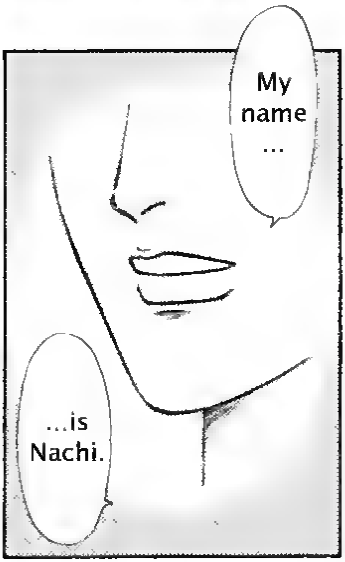
But she seemed like Toko to me.
Yes...
That was Yoko.
You're crazy...
...that man can tell us whether I'm crazy or not.
It doesn't make sense, but...
Have someone bring the sacred bead necklace I was wearing...
Ichiro-ta!


We need the yang stones.
By neutralizing the poison with a mantra, we can still save him.
Kyoji's been poisoned.



Please ...
... Nachi.



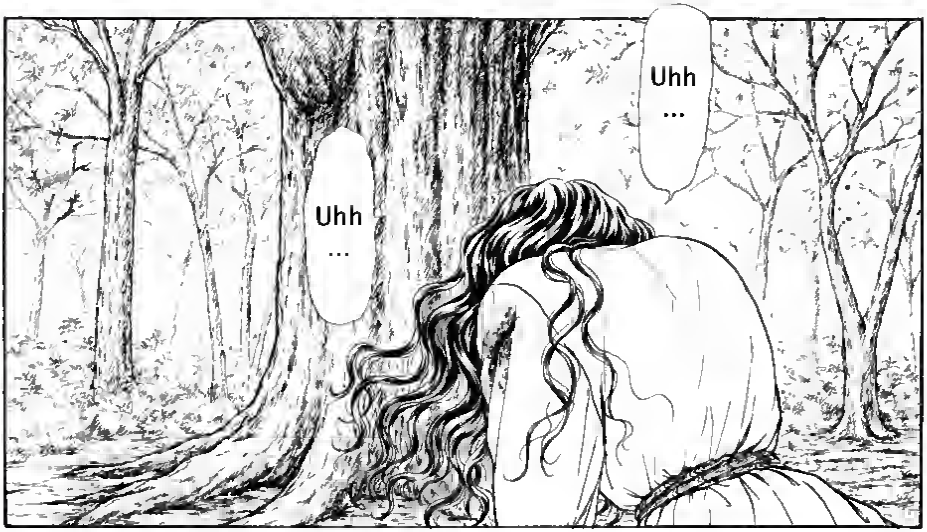

My name ...
...is Nachi.

He's not as simple as that. He can't be pinned down with petty words like "humane" or "self-preservation."
First that woman, and now Kyoji... How humane of you.
Or maybe it's to save his own skin...
All right ...
I'm going after Yoko!
We'll have to continue this later.
HMPH!
Toko...

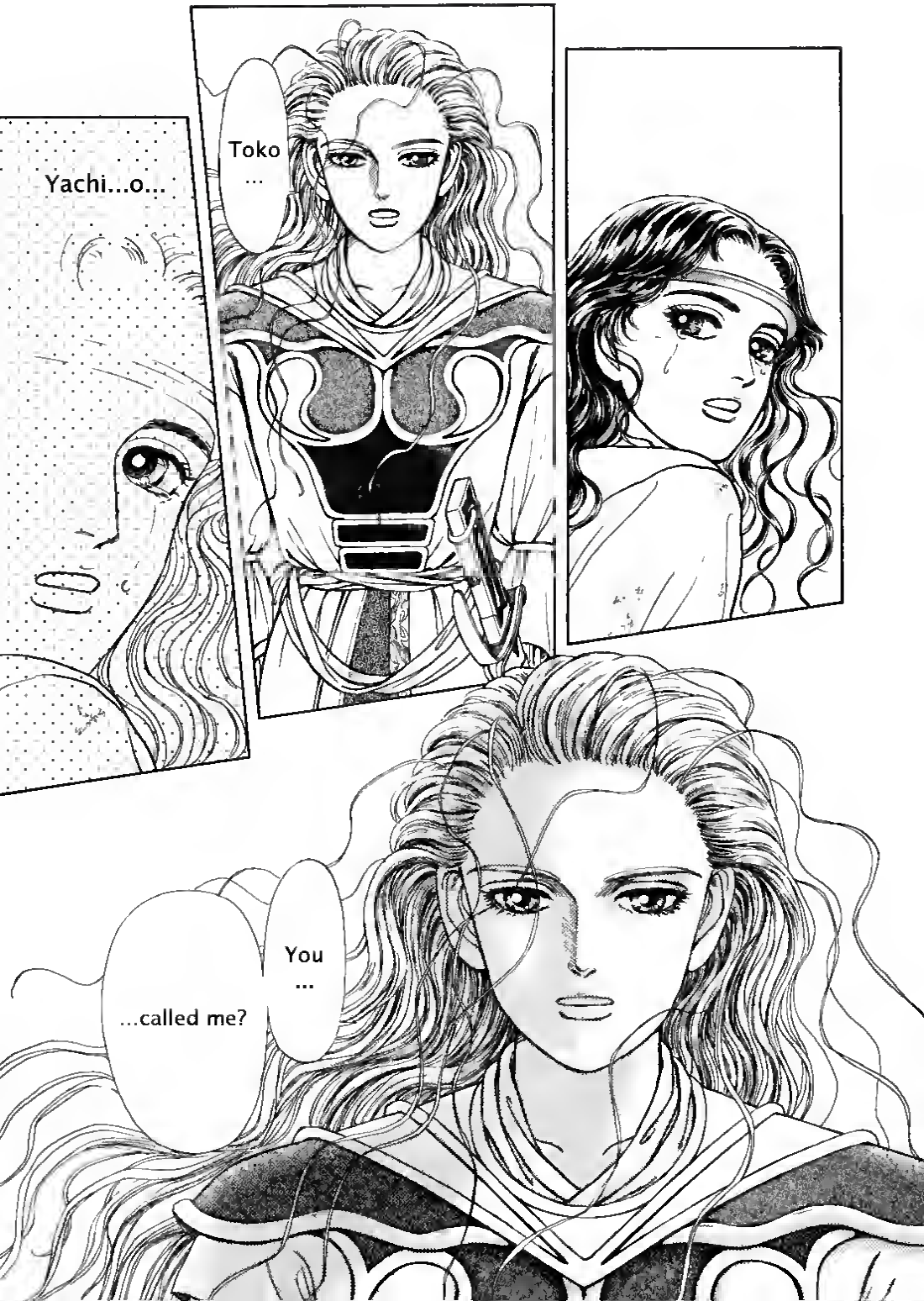
Quiet! Don't shout in my ear.
Don't think I'm just going to do what you say out of fear for my life.
Listen, buddy!
You're a real man!
It's 'cause I like you.
I think I've got a crush on you.

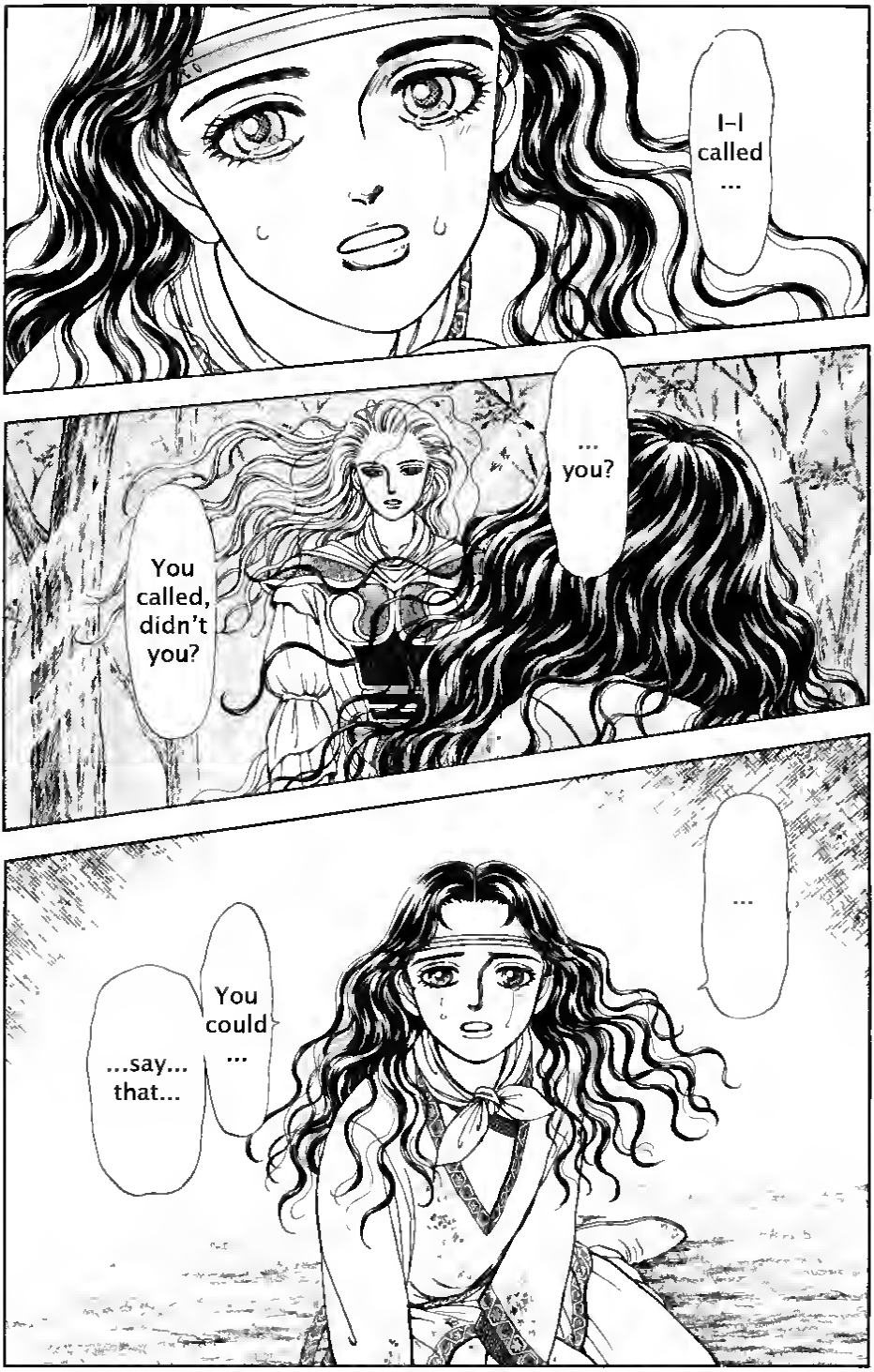
PANT
PANT...
PANT
PANT...
Somebody...
Somebody help!
Get this
off me!

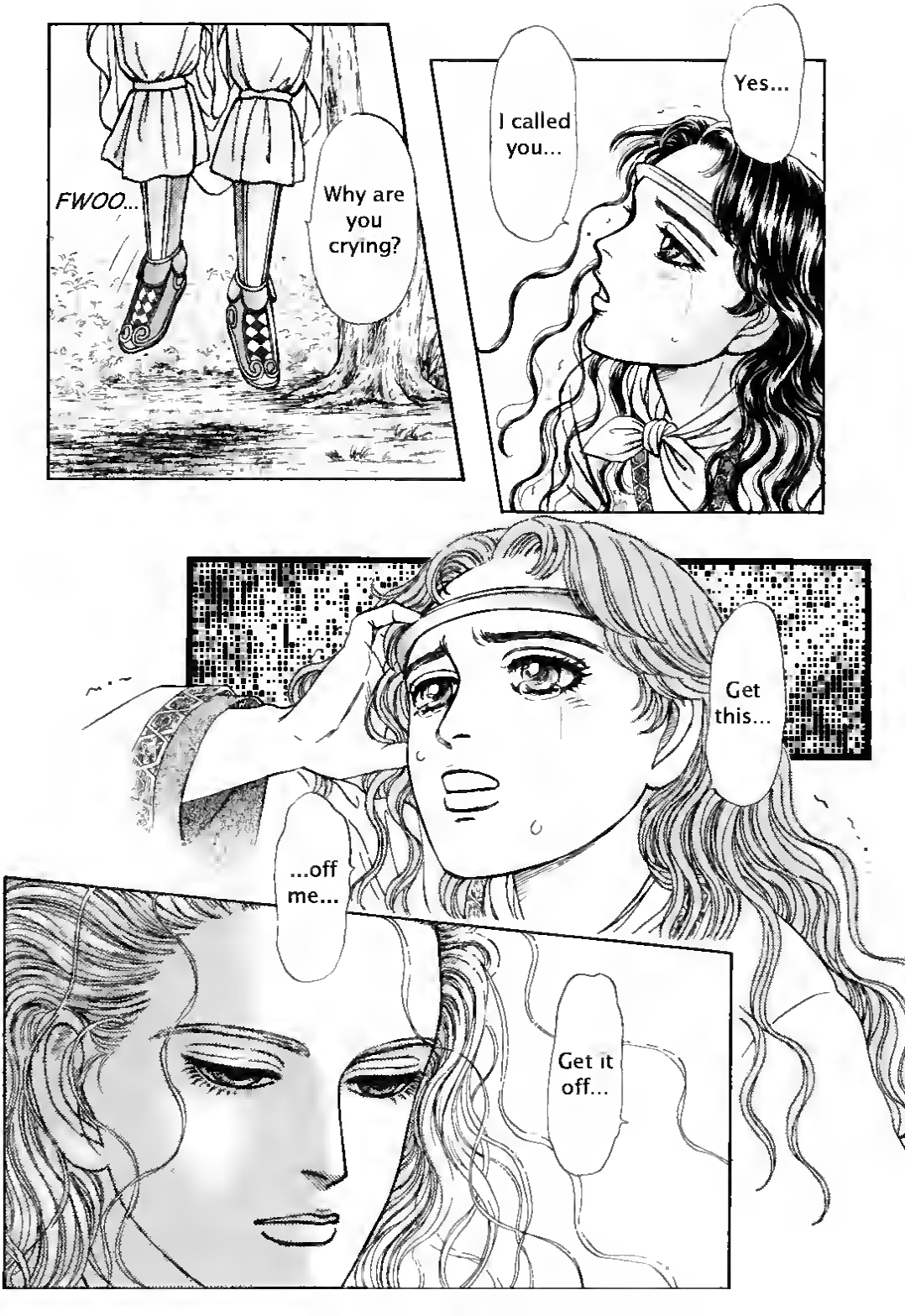
Get this off me!

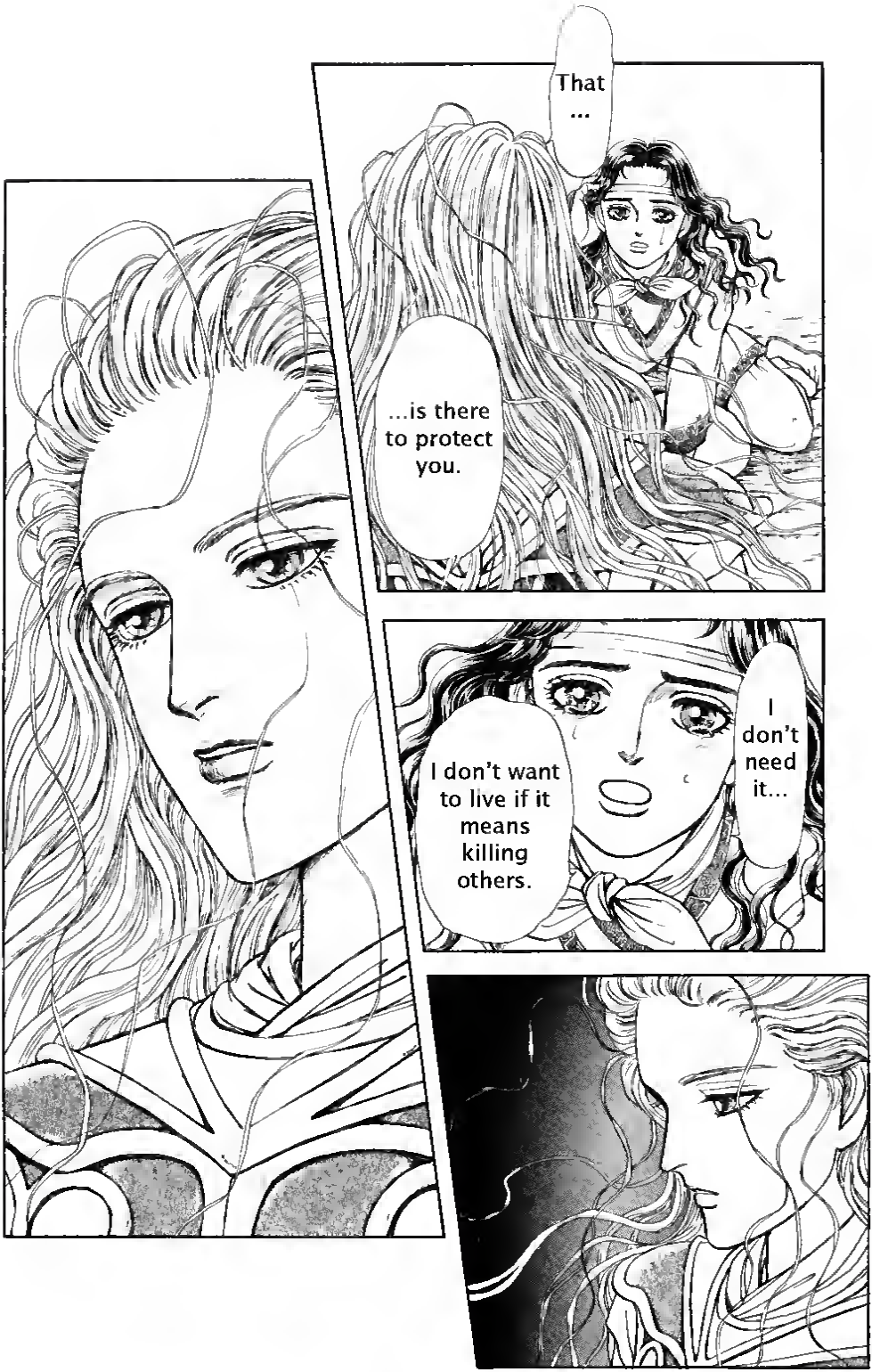

Uhh ...
Uhh ...

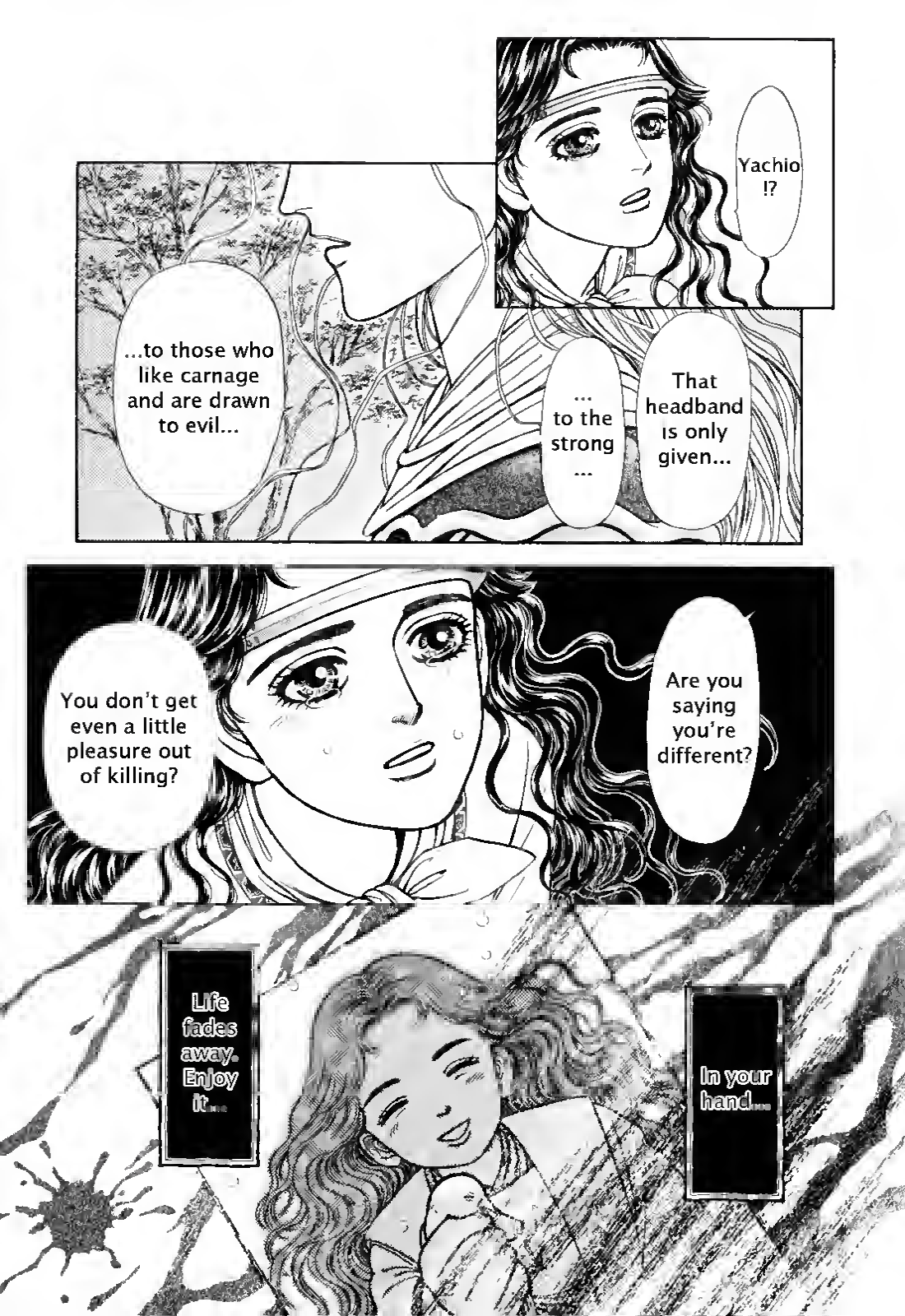
So you're the one who called me...


Yachi...o...
Toko
...
You
...
...called me?


I-I called ...
... you?
You called, didn't you?
...
You could ...
...say... that...


FWOO...
Why are you crying?
I called you...
Yes...
Get this...
...off me...
Get it off...


That ...
...is there to protect you.
I don't want to live if it means killing others.
I don't need it...

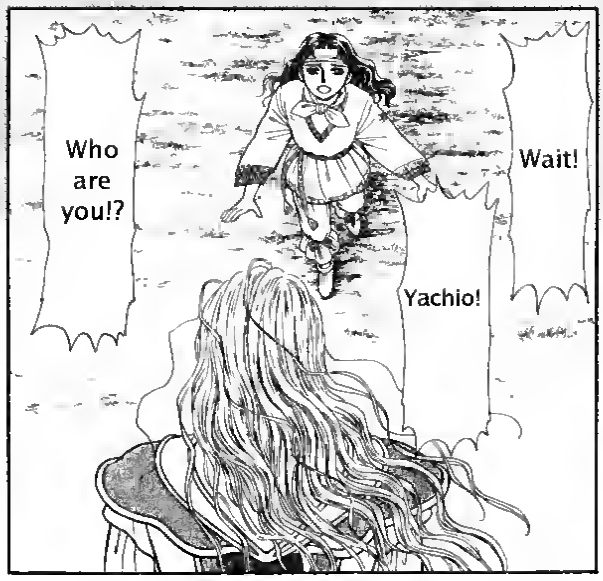

Yachio !?
That headband is only given...
... to the strong ...
...to those who like carnage and are drawn to evil...
Are you saying you're different?
You don't get even a little pleasure out of killing?
In your hand...
Life fades away. Enjoy it...

...know it...
Enjoy that feeling!
That electrifying thrill...
That indescribable feeling...
I'm not diffe-rent ...
No...

To... dust!?

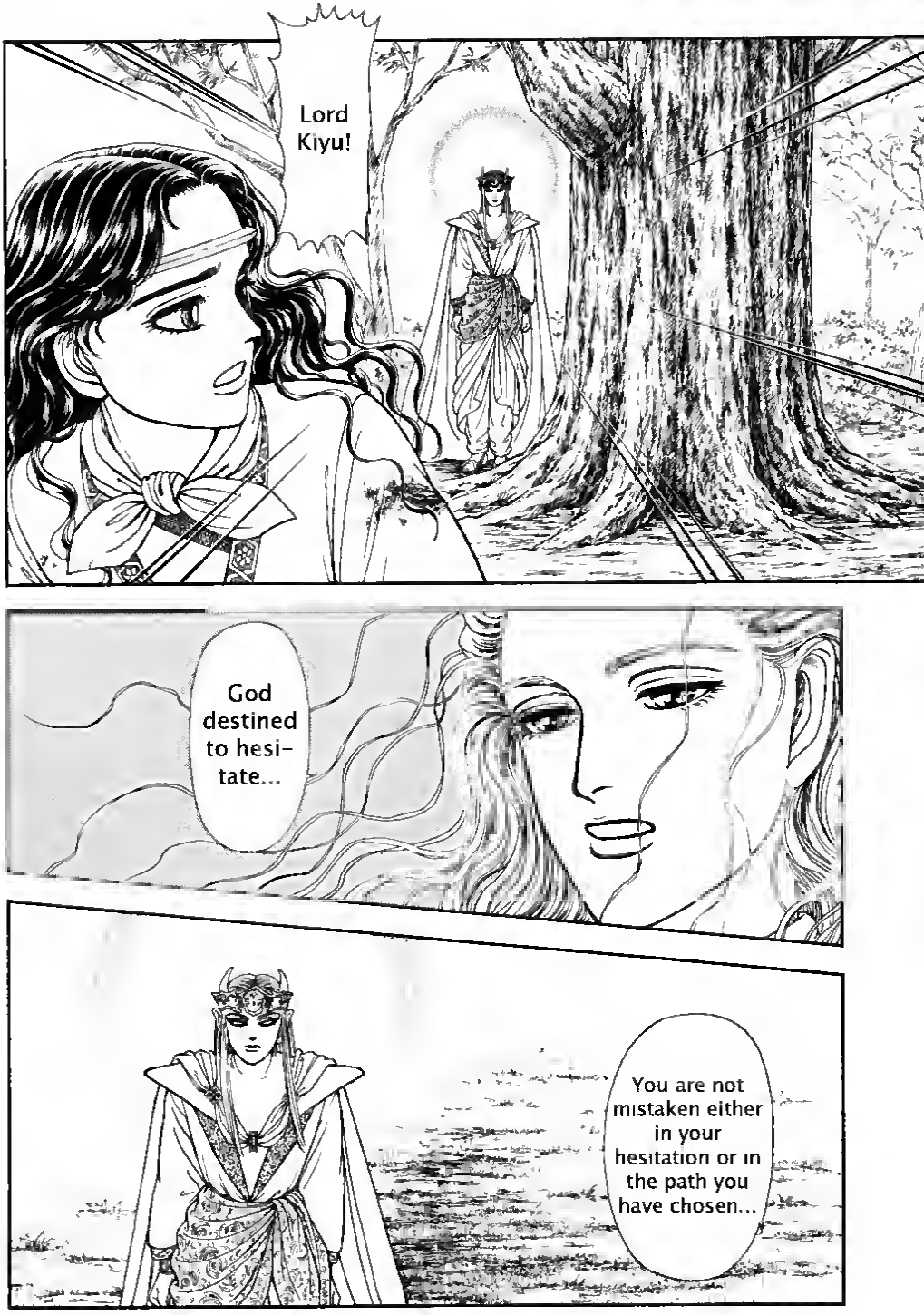
Eventually, it will return to dust...

...and if you turn "that" into dust, then...



I am someone who is imperfect ...
The one who does what needs to be done...

The only child of man bearing a divine name...
The one who knows the divine names of all the gods...
Yachio!
Yachio ...

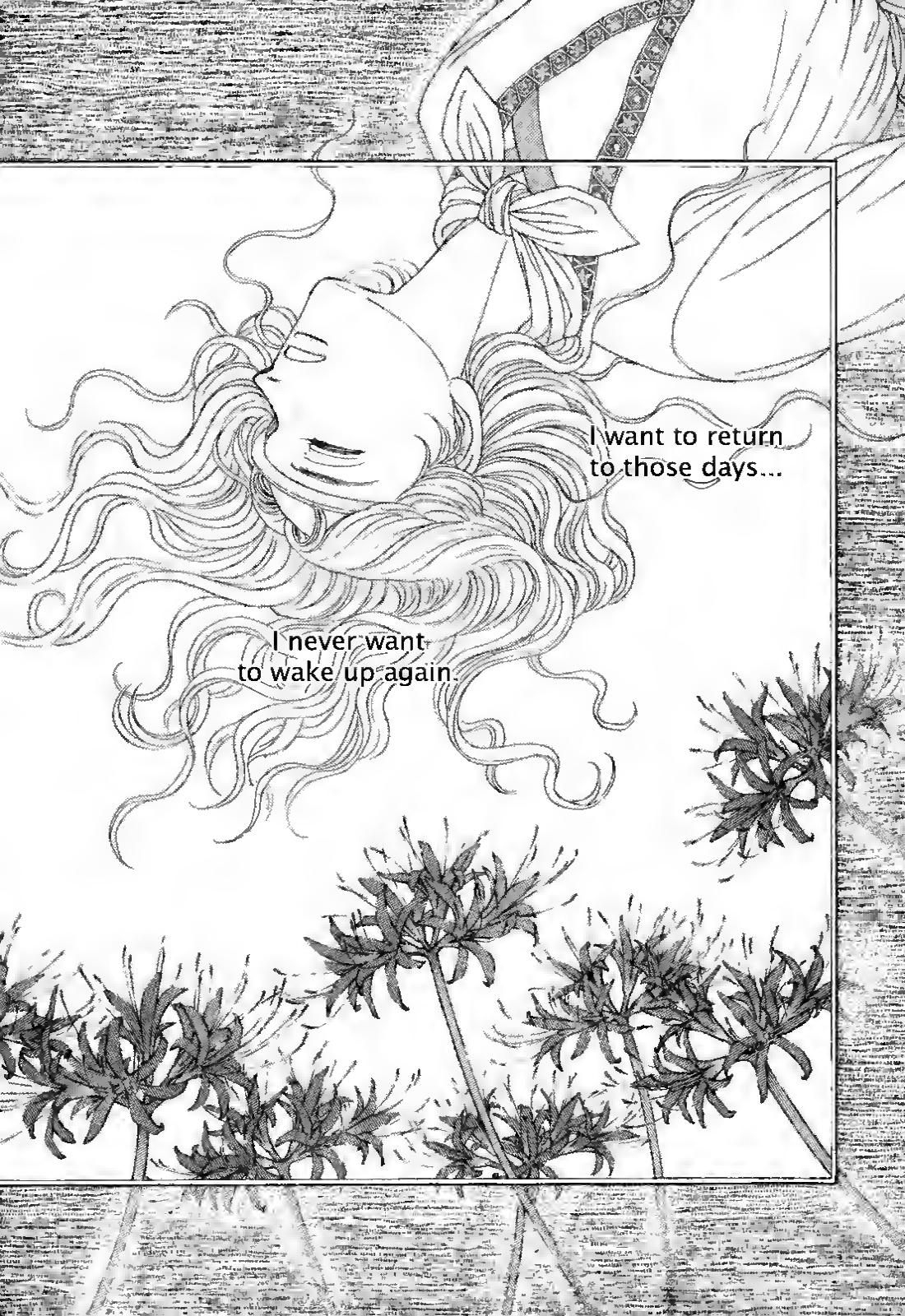

Lord Kiyu!
God destined to hesi-tate...
You are not mistaken either in your hesitation or in the path you have chosen...

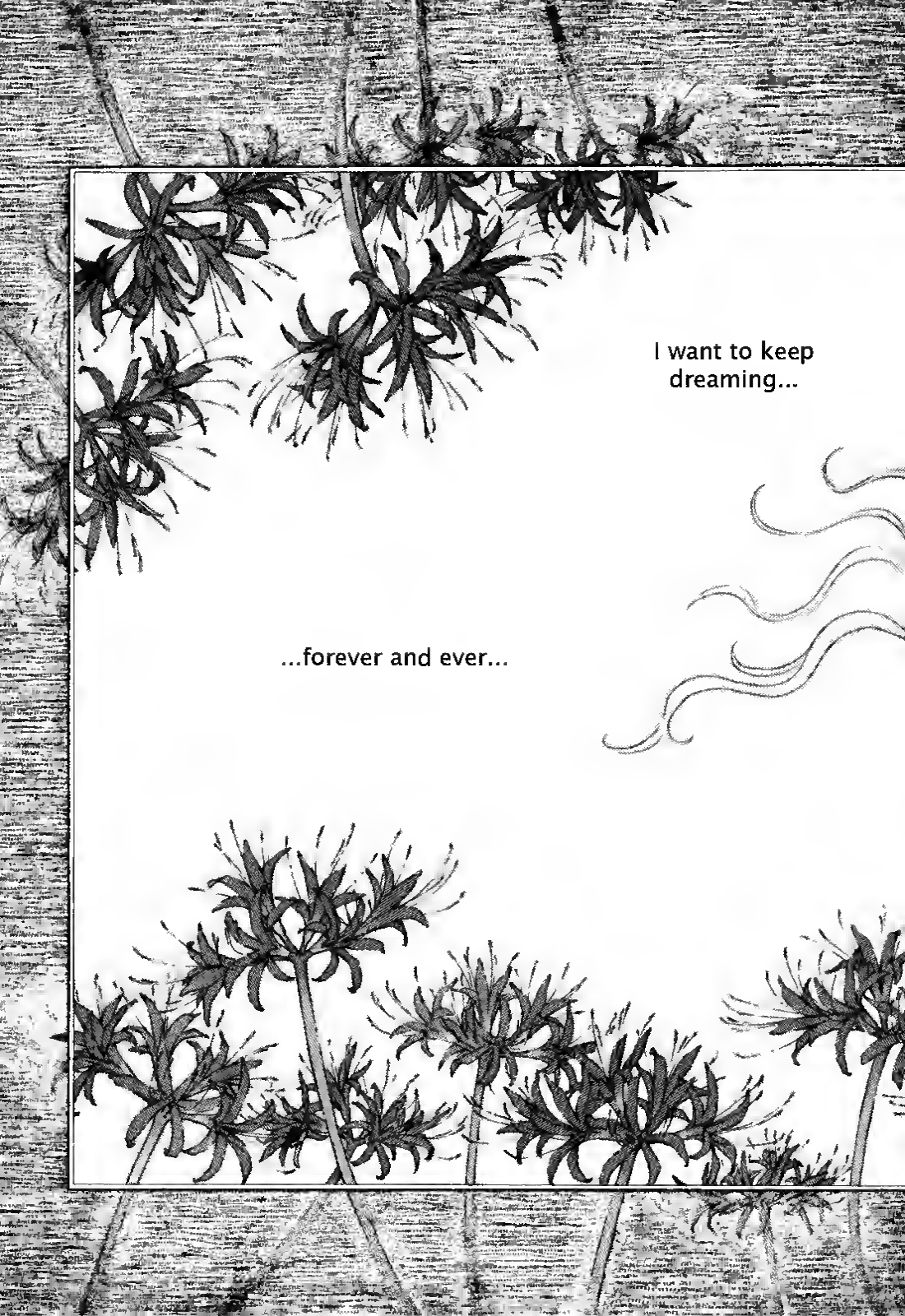
Yachio! Why would you say that!?
Go to Fuji, Toko...
Are you on the side of the demon gods!?
Fuji...

Yachio...
My dear child...
It seems I have many questions ...
...to ask you...

...
tell you
any-
thing
...
I won't
...
Yoko
...
I won't obey
you any longer!
I may
look like
Yoko, but
I am not
Yoko!
DASH

Takaya...


I want to return
to those days...
I never want
to wake up again.


I want to keep dreaming...
...forever and ever...

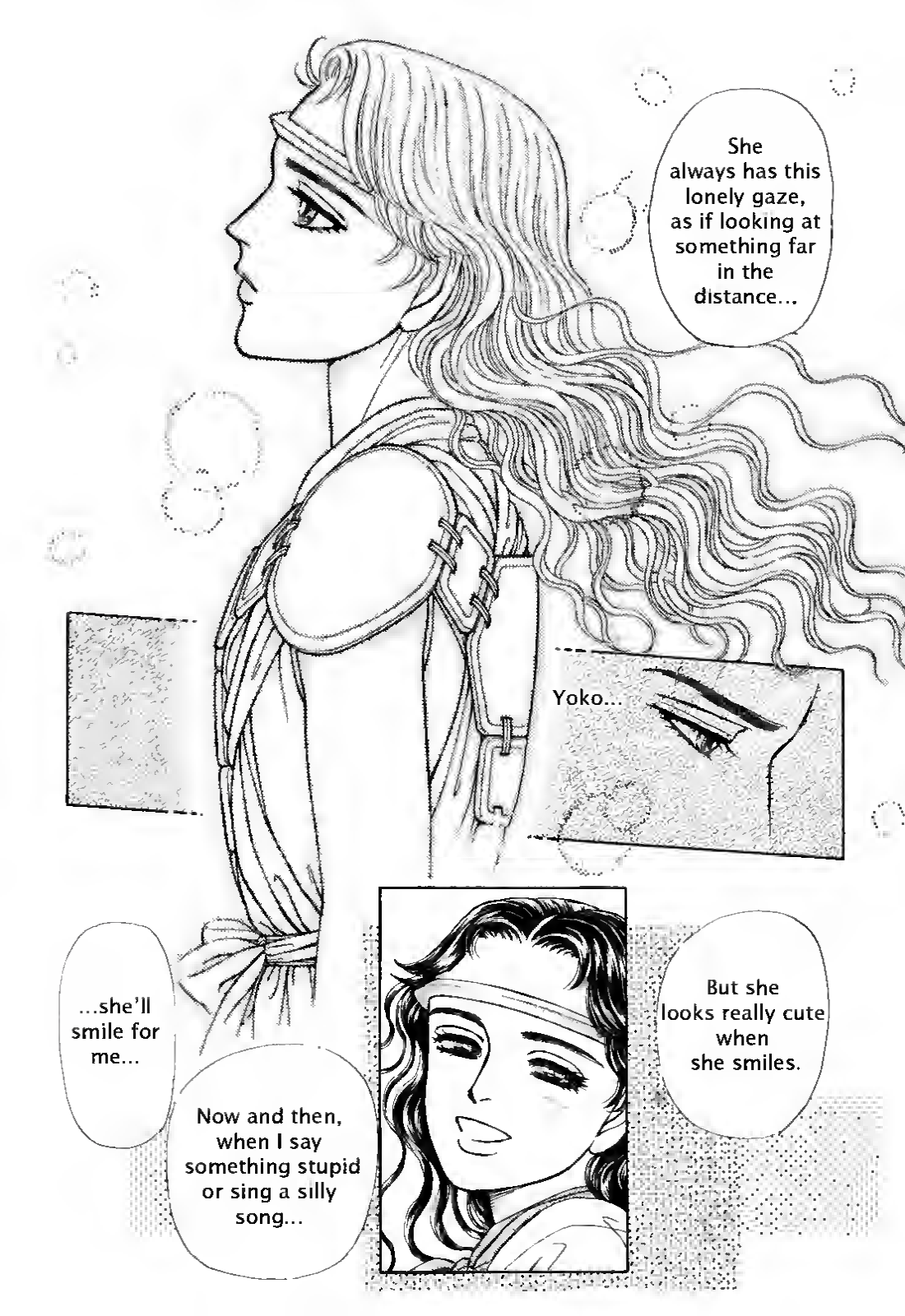
What're you crying about?

I have good night vision.
You're the crybaby.
You were crying, weren't you!
Kai...
Liar!
Something got in my eye.
Shut up. Get lost!
...stal-king you.
I'm not...
Quit stalking me, will you!?
I said shut up!

You're gonna look for Yoko and that Aohiko guy, right!?
You're preparing for a trip, right?
Taka-yaa...
Take me with you.
Take me with you. Please?
I can come!? I can come!?
You're going to tag along anyway, no matter what I say!

What was she like?
Yoko ...
Hm?
What was she like!?
Stop saying "was."
Yoko is strong...
...
Tell me about ...
... Yoko ...

Kiyu treats her especially well.
Stronger than any number of men combined.
She can use mantras...
Yoko's never cried!
So she didn't cry all the time!?
She says, "I have to stay alive"...
That's her favorite line...
She doesn't smile that much either...
...

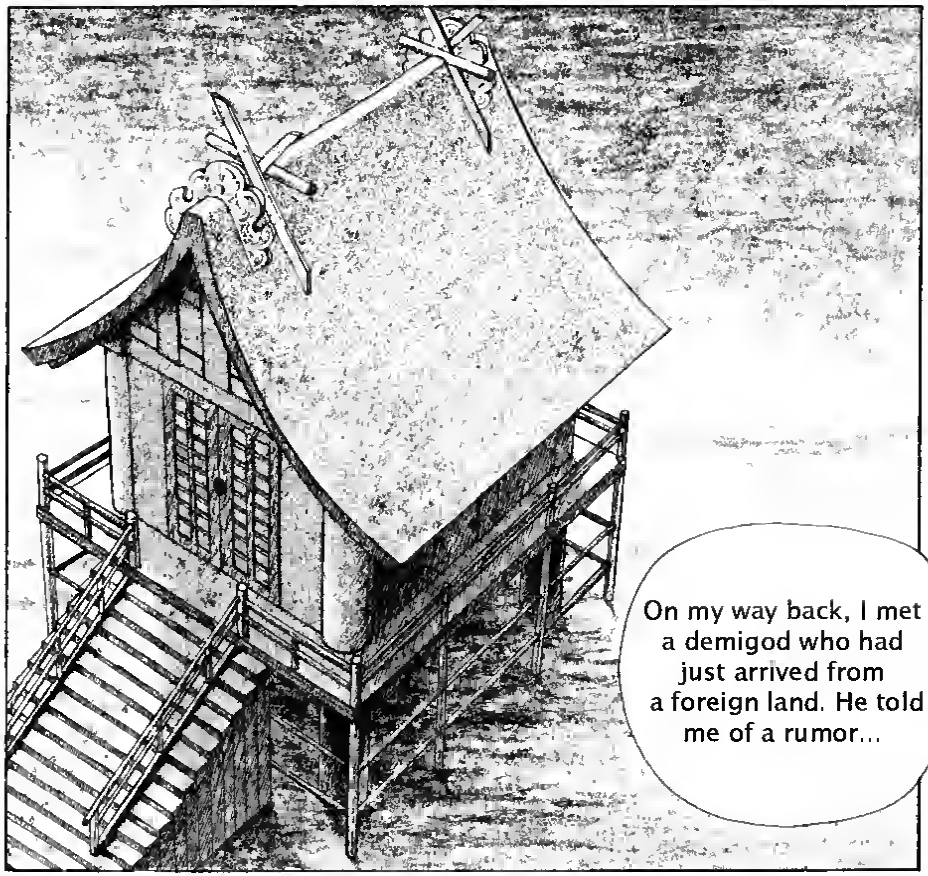

She always has this lonely gaze, as if looking at something far in the distance...
Yoko...
But she looks really cute when she smiles.
Now and then, when I say something stupid or sing a silly song...
...she'll smile for me...

...both of them...
I wanted to make them happy...
SNIFF
FLAP
You must have been the only person who made Yoko smile.
Thank you.

Tell me about Toko.
I just felt like it.
Why are you thanking me?
She looks really cute when she smiles!
She's cute even when she doesn't smile!
No fair!
That's all!
And...!?

Not today!
Come on! That's not fair!
I'm tired!
How come!?
...thinking about Toko!?
Was he crying because he was...
Takaya, you liar...

...but today...
Today, everything reminds me of her...
Smiling Toko...
Sulking Toko...
Crying Toko...
My Toko...


On my way back, I met a demigod who had just arrived from a foreign land. He told me of a rumor...

...that someone riding a big snake-like beast is destroying demigods and demon gods in foreign lands...

Dest-
roying
them!?
From the summit of Fuji, I saw someone who fit the description riding a mysterious beast through the skies.
I've also seen something like a big snake sailing across the moon.
Lord Risson!
L-like me?
A beau-
tiful,
young
man...
Katsura... He looked very much like you...

...to destroy the demigods and demon gods...

He will eventually return to this land...

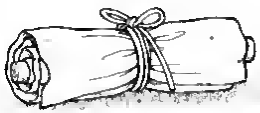
Something is underway.

This man who looks like Katsura...

Who could he be...

Kiyu's army should be headed there too.

Please make your way there.



I mapped out the route to Mount Fuji on the scroll I just gave you.

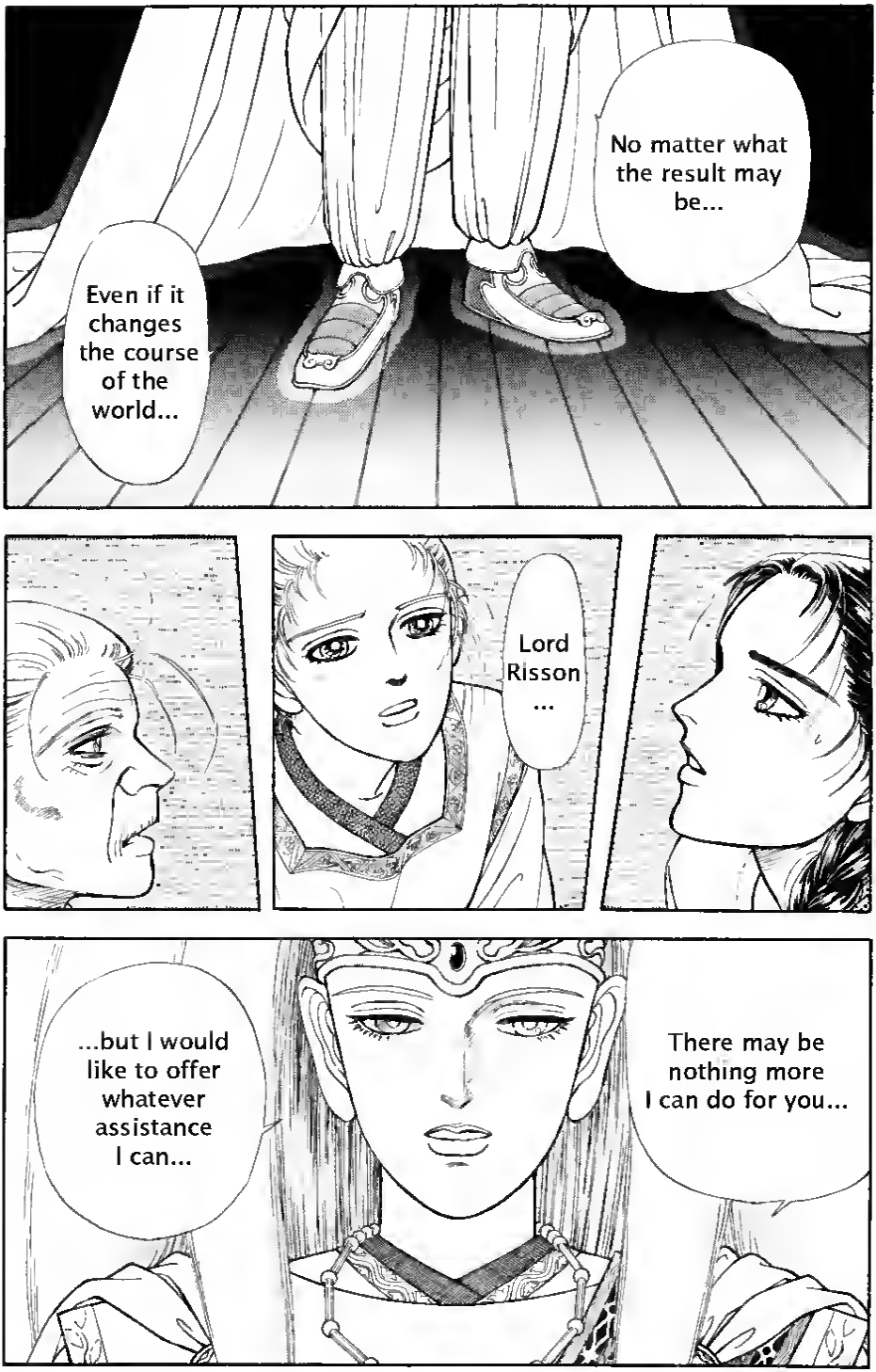
You won't be accompanying us?

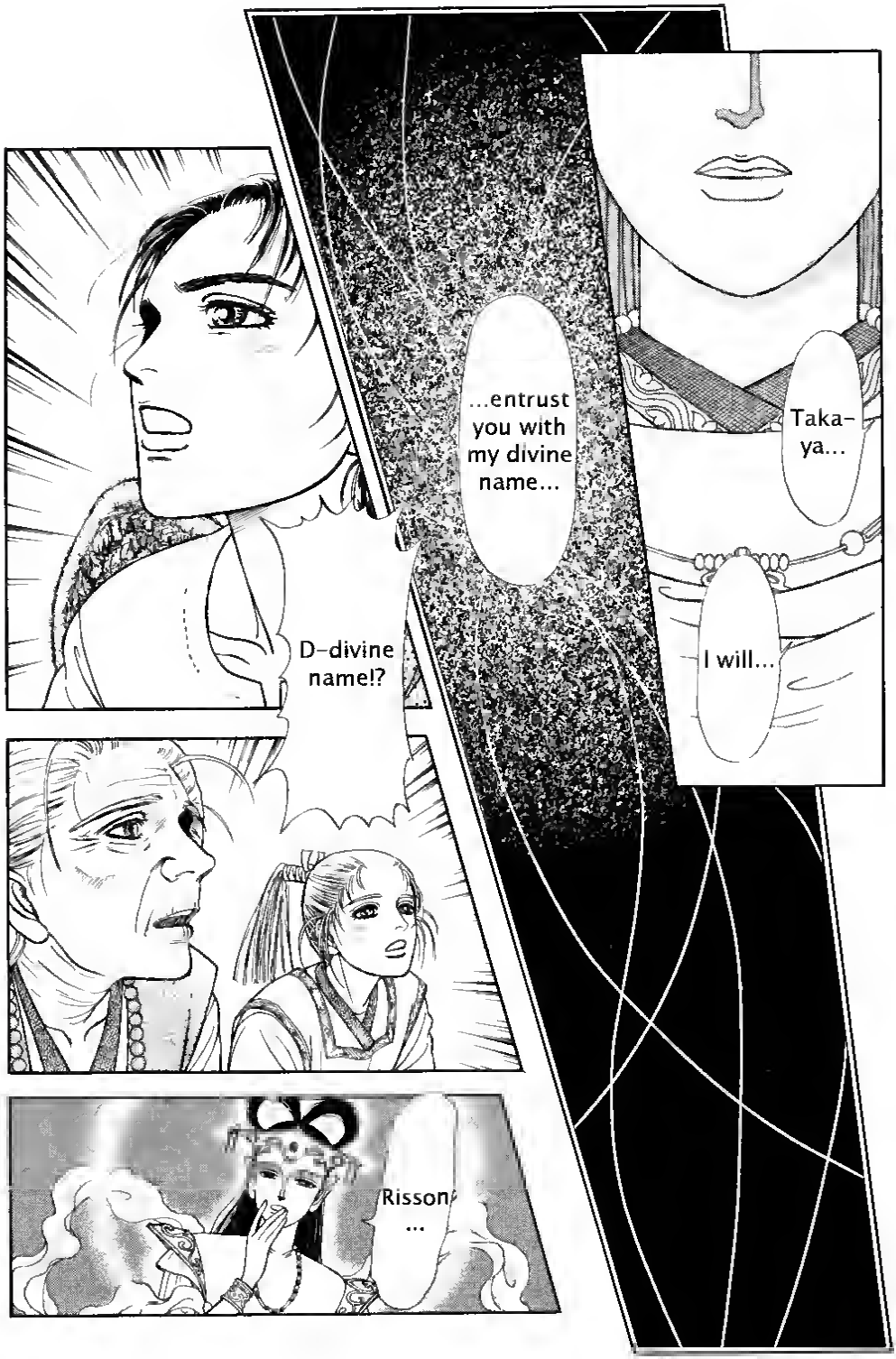
If your paths cross, you can get information about Aohiko and Toko.

I can't ...
...go with you.
I am leaving for Mount Towada.
What should we do once we get to Mount Fuji?
There ...
...at the foot of Fuji ...
...you will find... Shangri-La.

Shang-riLa!?
Yes... That is the only way to describe it.
...
...I will leave that...
As for what you should do there...
M-me?
My judg-ment?
...to your judment... Takaya.

You have the ability to judge whether something is right or wrong through intuition rather than reason.
Leaving aside reason ...
...look at it with your own eyes...
...and follow the voice in your heart.
What ...
...do you mean?
You go... see... feel, anddecide.
It is not some-thing I can decide.
I will abide by your judgment.


No matter what the result may be...
Even if it changes the course of the world...
Lord Risson ...
...but I would like to offer whatever assistance I can...
There may be nothing more I can do for you...

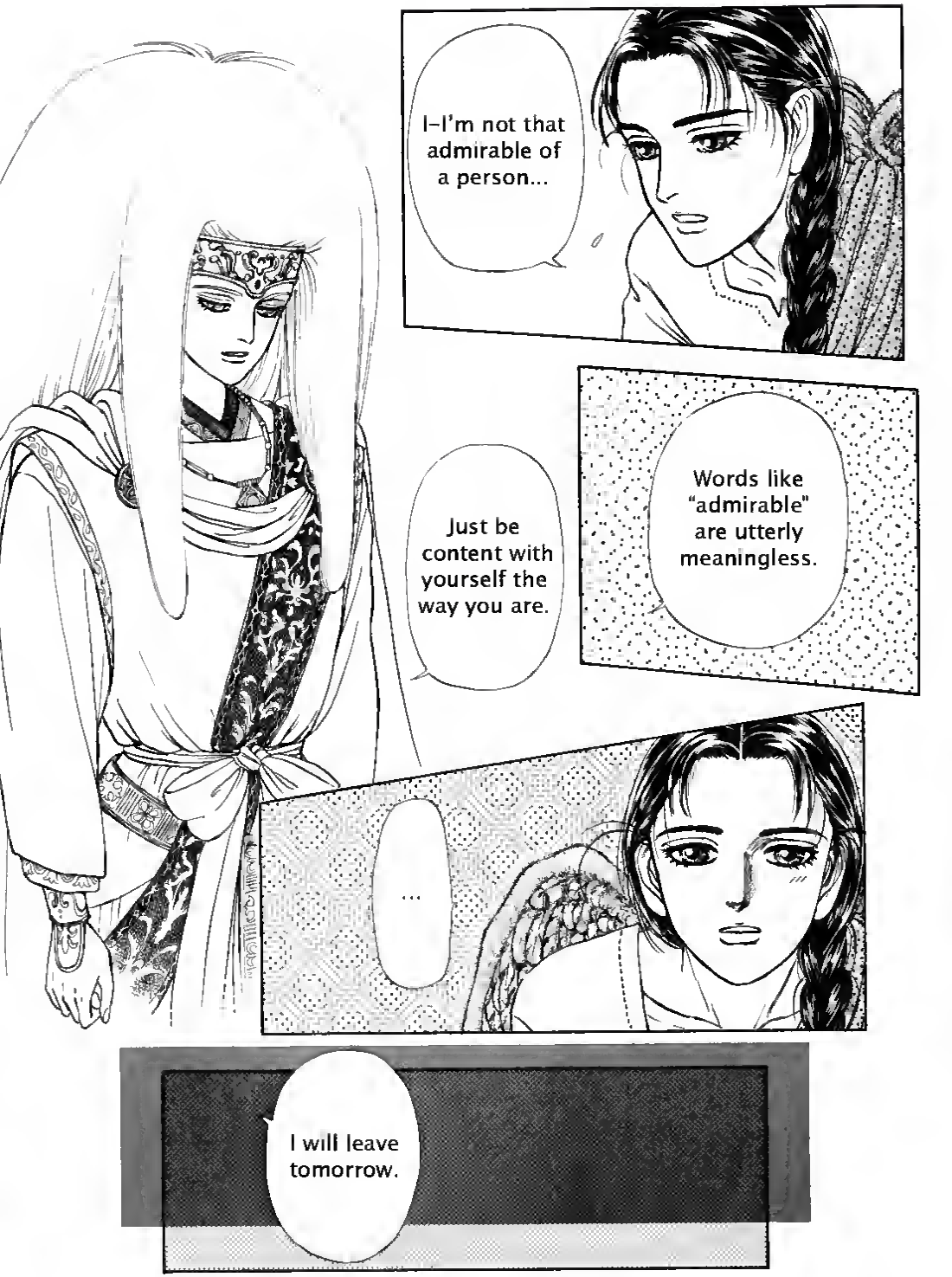

...entrust you with my divine name...
Taka-ya...
I will...
D-divine name!?
Risson...

Entrust me... with a divine name...
What on earth is going on at Fuji...?
A name... that gives the knower control over that god...?
Only the one who knows this name can call me instantly across any distance.
When you are in need of my power, concentrate on this.
I will send it as a thoug-ht.
...and come to Towada...
...go together to the summit of Fuji...
Rescue Aohiko and Toko...

I have received ...
...your divine name, Lord Risson.

An encounter is a miraculous thing.
It alters the future of both parties, as we have seen...
I have serious questions about humans and gods...
...what humans are... what gods are...

It causes me great concern.
But...
... Taka-ya...
When I look at you, my fears magically disappear.
Aohiko must have raised you with such exceptional care...
...because you gave him that same peace of mind.
Those god-like wings look as if they were made for your back.


I-I'm not that admirable of a person...
Words like "admirable" are utterly meaningless.
Just be content with yourself the way you are.
...
I will leave tomorrow.

I'll stay...

...here...

I'll stay here forever...

I can't hurt anyone here...

I can hear a lullaby...

She kept singing...
Mother didn't stop the lullaby after Yoko fell asleep...
She kept singing for Toko...
When Yoko fell asleep, Mother said, "Toko"... as she looked at Yoko's face...
...and cried.
I can hear the lullaby...
Wait... that's Takaya's lullaby...

I love the sound of his voice when he says, "Toko"...
I love Takaya's voice...
I love Takaya's eyes...
I love the way his eyes find me no matter where I am...
I'll stay...

I'll stay here...

...until Takaya finds me.

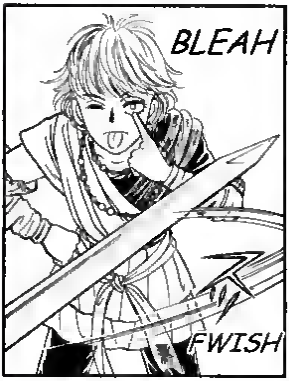
I'll wait here for as long as it takes...

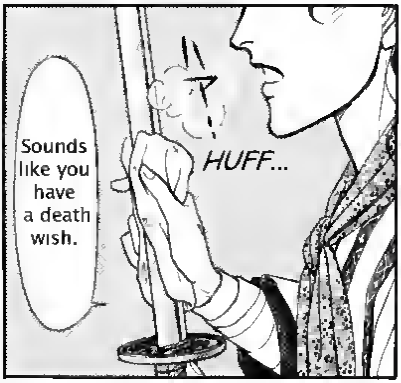
So why did that man with the mizura* hairdo call you Ichirota?
I told you to get lost. Are you deaf?
I have nothing more to do with you.
Well, I have something to do with you.
Remember? I've got a crush on you.

*A hairstyle for men in ancient Japan. The hair was parted down the center of the head and tied in loops around the ears.

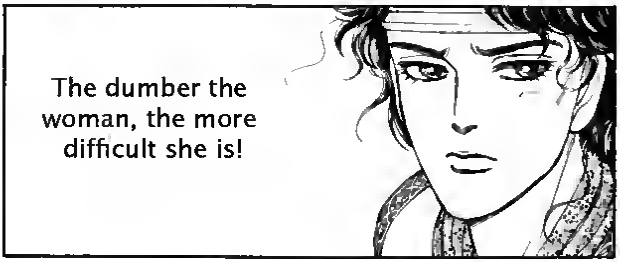
My name is Kimika.
Ki-mi-ka!
Wo-man!
...you'll end up being trifled with and discarded if you stay here...
Listen! Even if I don't lay my hands on you...
...as a corpse.
You have such nice eyes!
They're giving me chills!

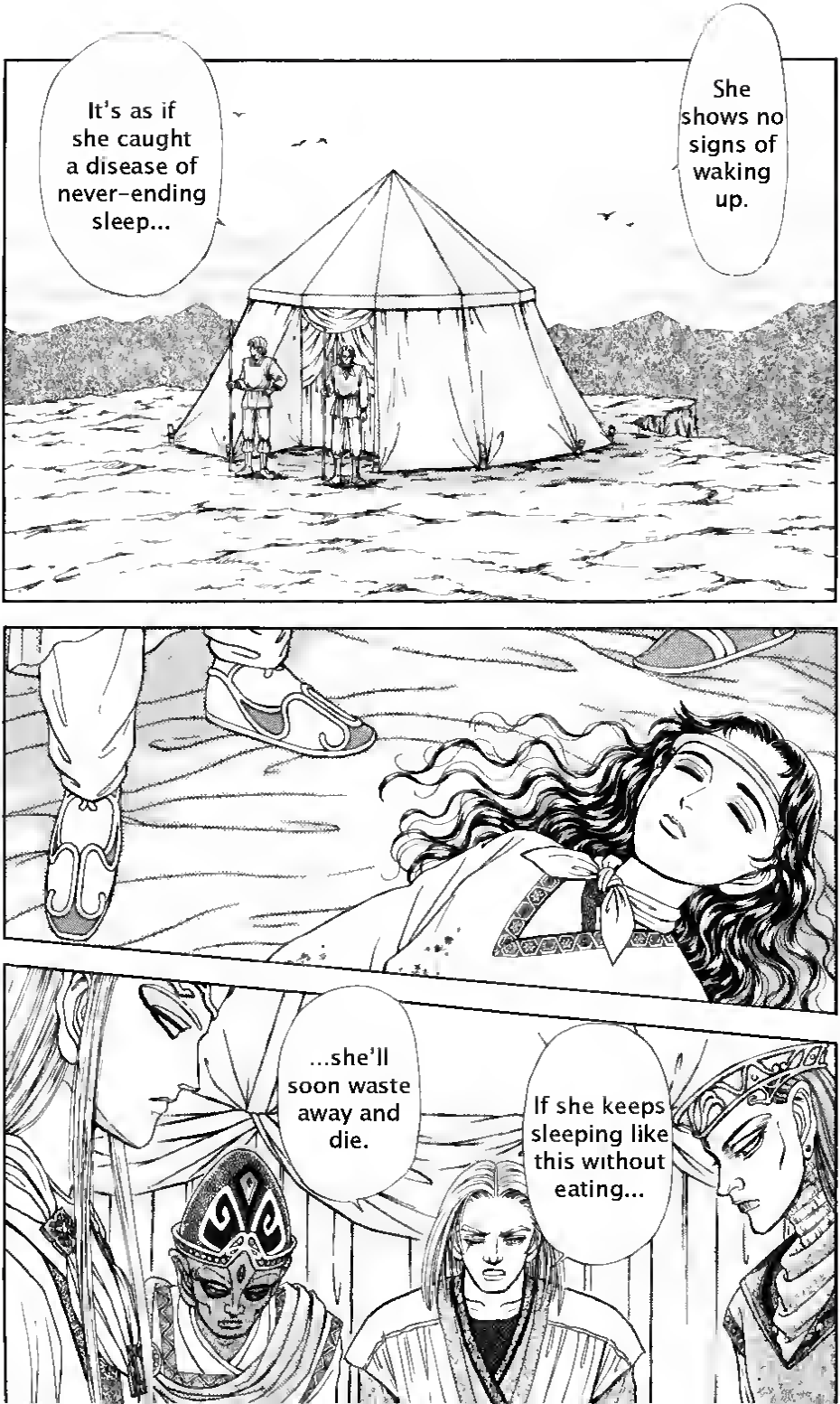
What a gent-leman...
Hm... You're not going to lay your hands on me, huh.

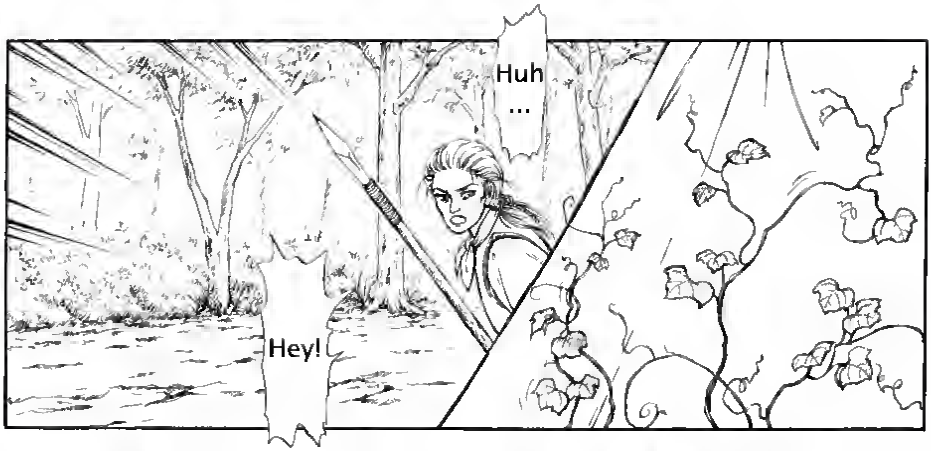

BLEAH
FWISH

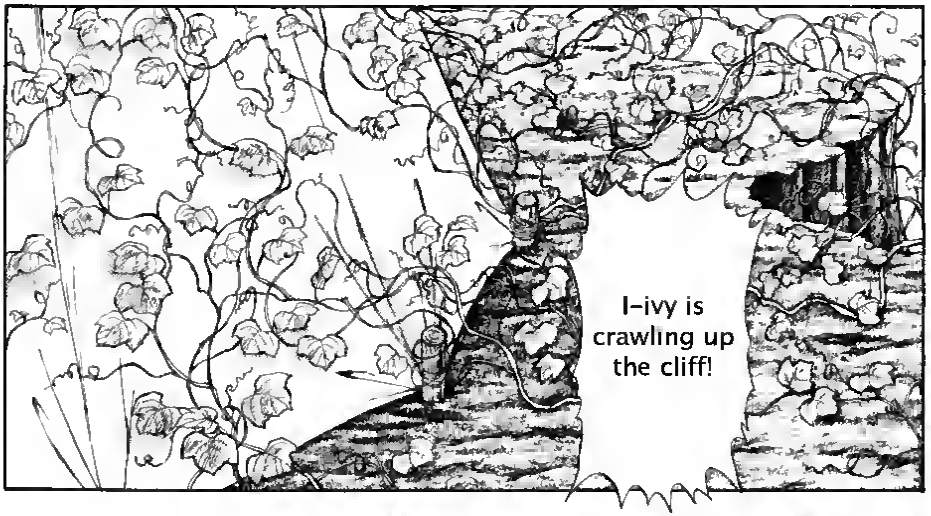

Sounds like you have a death wish.
HUFF...

Stupi ...!
I'll go talk it over with your boss!
I'm a useful woman.


The dumber the woman, the more difficult she is!


It's as if she caught a disease of never-ending sleep...
She shows no signs of waking up.
...she'll soon waste away and die.
If she keeps sleeping like this without eating...

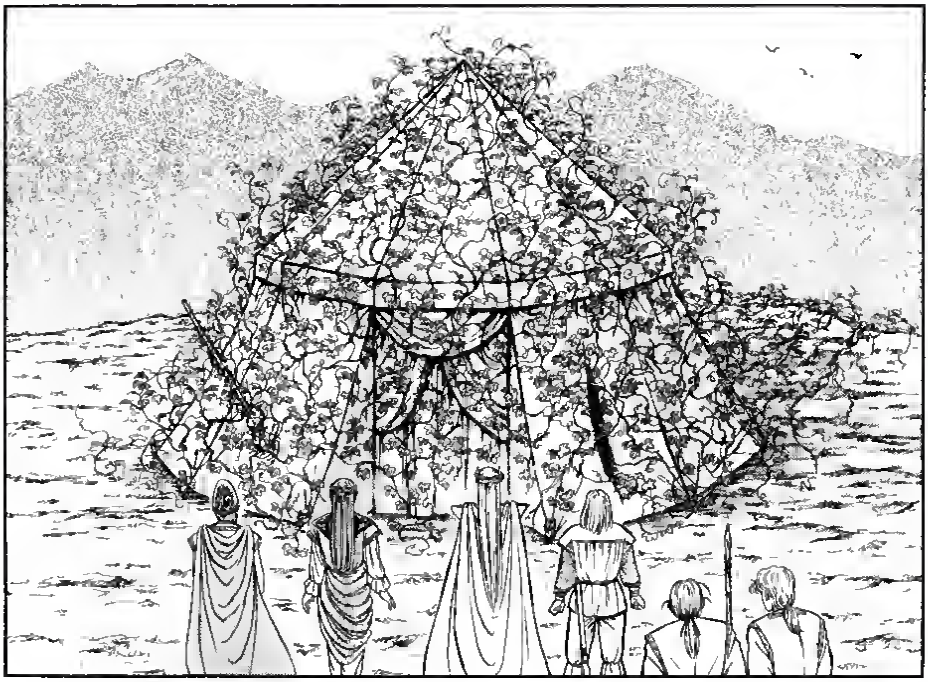

Huh
...
Hey!


I-ivy is crawling up the cliff!

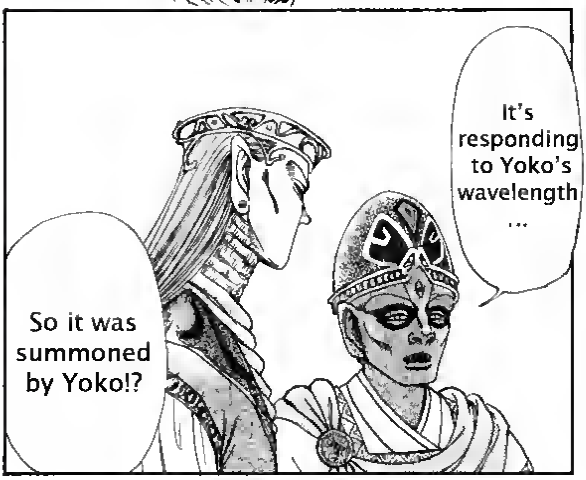
There's ivy slithering up the tent!
Ivy!
C-Cap-tain!
You better take a look at this!

Lord Kiyu! Come outside!
Whoa!
Whoa!
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
Wh- what ...
RUSTLE
RUSTLE

Whoa!
SNIK
SNIK
Get Yoko out of there!
SLASH
What is this!?
We-we can't, Captain!
What on earth ...
...

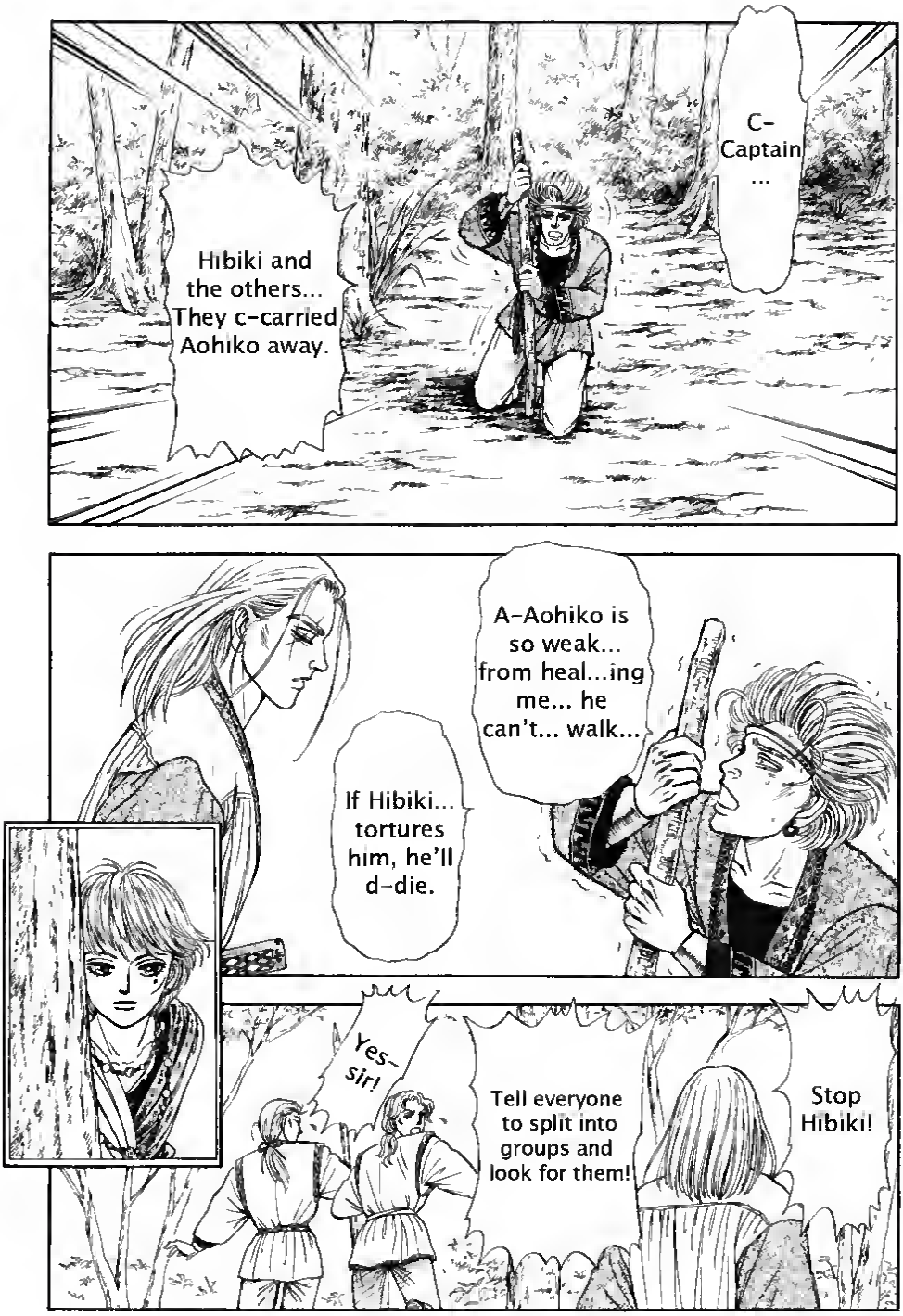


It's like ...
...a cocoon ...


It's responding to Yoko's wavelength ...
So it was summoned by Yoko!?

She said, "I may look like Yoko, but I am not Yoko."
Yoko does not have this kind of ability...
He is the only one who can wake her... whether she's Yoko or Toko.
Bring Aohiko here...
So the one inside that tent is...
No... Aohiko should be chanting a mantra to heal Kyoji, who collapsed from a poisoned dart...
Aohiko's wavelength is not nearby. Did you move him somewhere?

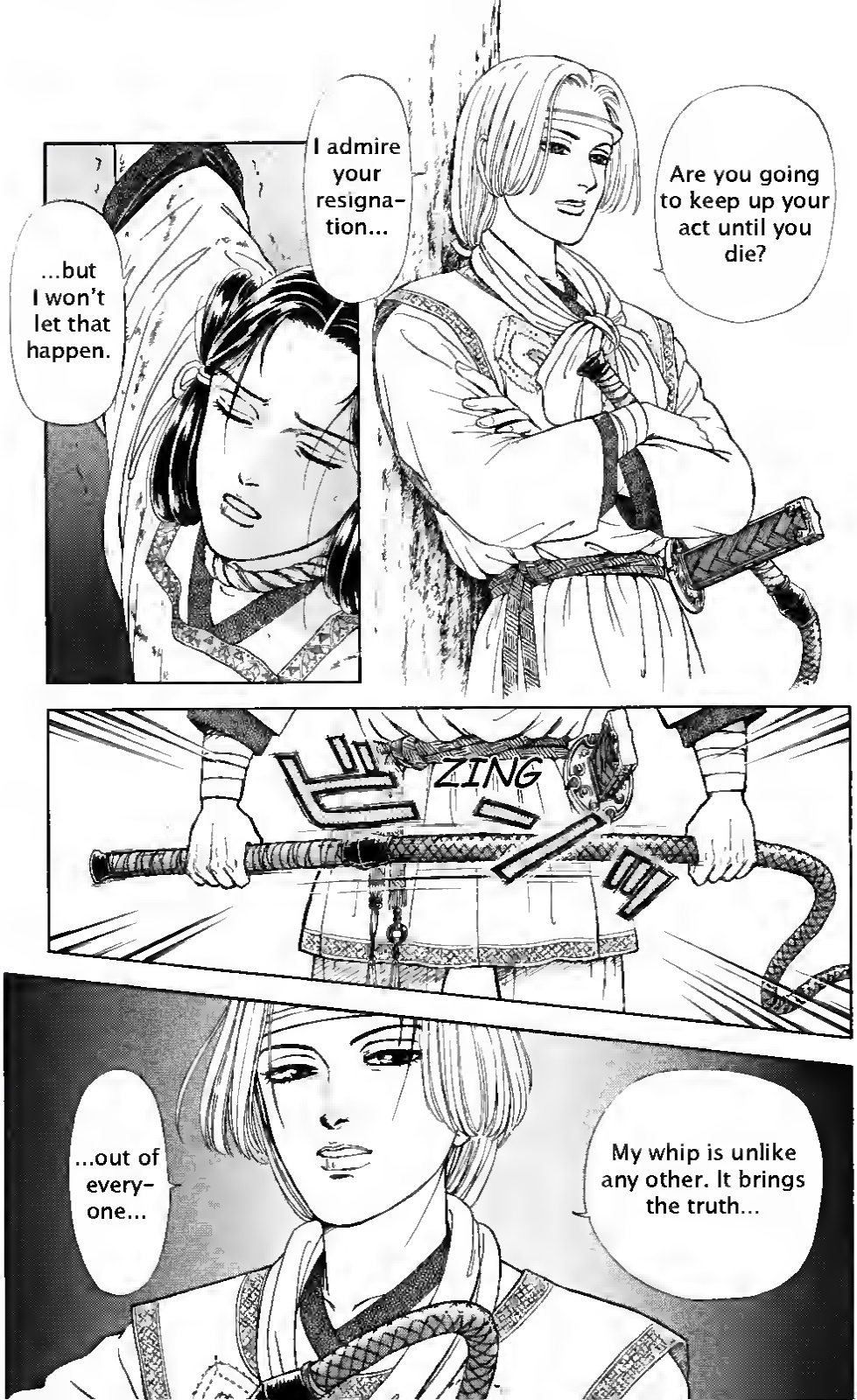
His body is too weak for that...
A mantra to draw out poison!?
Hibiki can get anyone to talk.
Actu-ally, Lord Kiyu ...
...I ordered Hibiki to get Aohiko to reveal what happened to Yoko's mind and body.
That was foolish ...
He knows him better than anyone else.
Let Nachi handle Aohiko.
L-Lord Kiyu ...


C-Captain ...
Hibiki and the others... They c-carried Aohiko away.
A-Aohiko is so weak... from heal...ing me... he can't... walk...
If Hibiki... tortures him, he'll d-die.
Yes-sir!
Tell everyone to split into groups and look for them!
Stop Hibiki!

Aohiko's life has been entrusted to him.
And tell Nachi!
Yoko is in there...
She's not waking up from her sleep...
C- Captain... what is... that...?
If Aohiko dies, Yoko will die too.
... Toko ...
Or should I say...

FPSHHH
CRACK

FPSHHH
CRACK
FPSHHH
CRACK
FPSHH
THWHIP
My arm is getting tired.
PANT
PANT PANT
This guy is tougher than he looks. He won't make a sound!


Are you going to keep up your act until you die?
I admire your resigna-tion...
...but I won't let that happen.
ZING
My whip is unlike any other. It brings the truth...
...out of every-one...

FWOOSH
FPSHHH
FPSHHH
CRACK
FPSHHH
Beg for forgiveness!
Beg for your life!
CRACK

FPSHHH
... and that wo- man ...
What you did for Yoko ...
FPSHHH
...and Kyoji...!
CRACK
FPSHHH
CRACK
Admit it!
It was all just to save yourself...
FPSHHH
It was all an act!

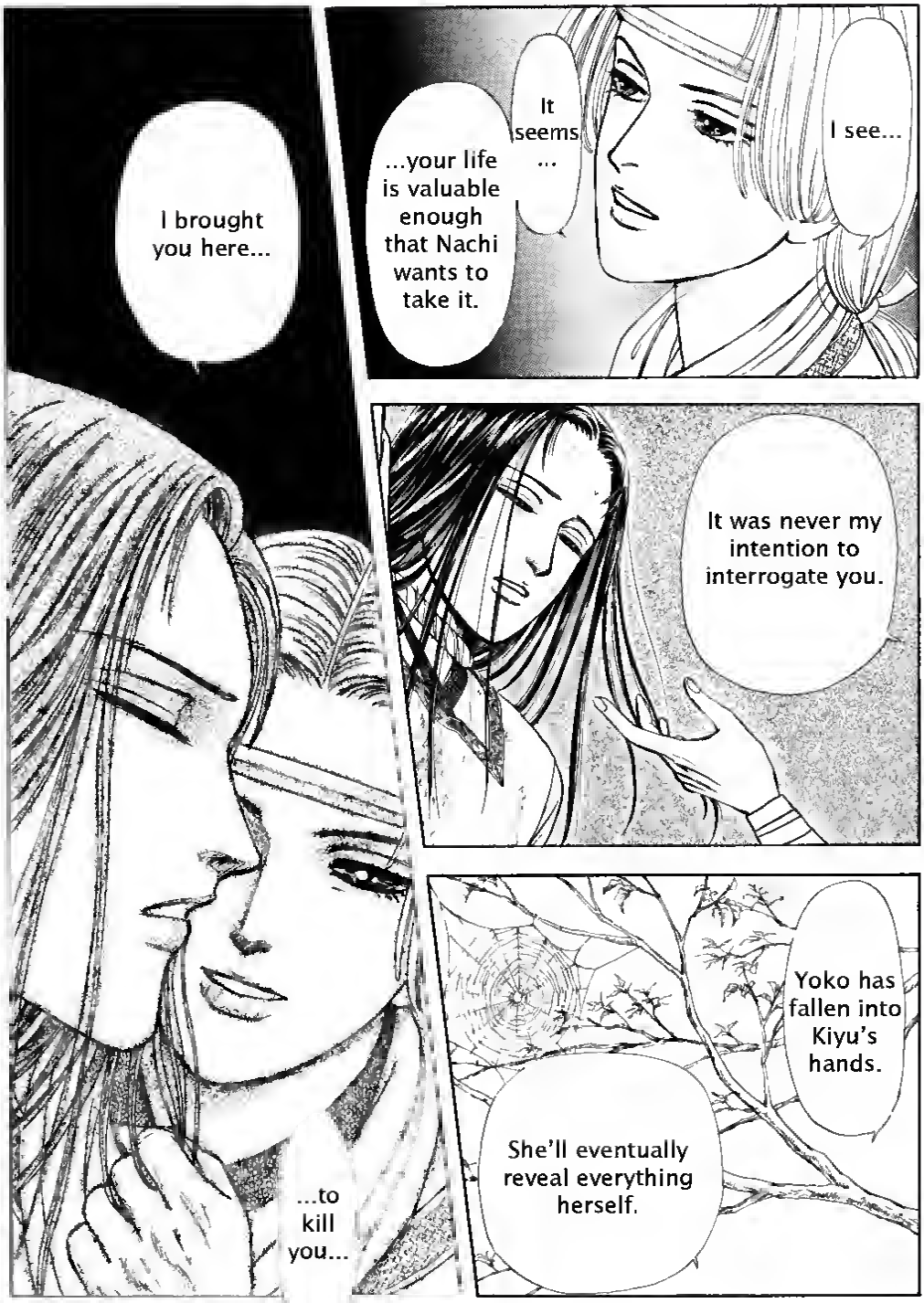
Putting on... an act ...
... would have... been better.
Admit it!
If you do, I'll spare your life.
I am... an...
... irre... solute man...
... who... cannot even...
...draw a line... be- tween right... and wrong.

We're supposed to get him to talk about Yoko!
Yeah!
Hibiki! What kind of nonsense is this?
WHISH
TUG
It'll ruin your pretty face...
...or slice off your nose...?
Shall we cut this ear off...?

Why did you call Yoko "Toko"!?
Why did Yoko come to her senses when you called her!?
Hey! Answer me!
FFSHHH
CRACK
What happened to Yoko!
Answer me!
Please... just set... her... free... Don't...you...
...f-feel sor...ry for... her?
... Yoko... or... Toko?
... matter .. if she's ...
What does... it...

You're the one I feel sorry for...
Yoko is treated like a treasure.
TUG
WHISH
Although... depending on your decision...
Easy there! Kyoji's gonna kill you.
...we can take real good care of you too...

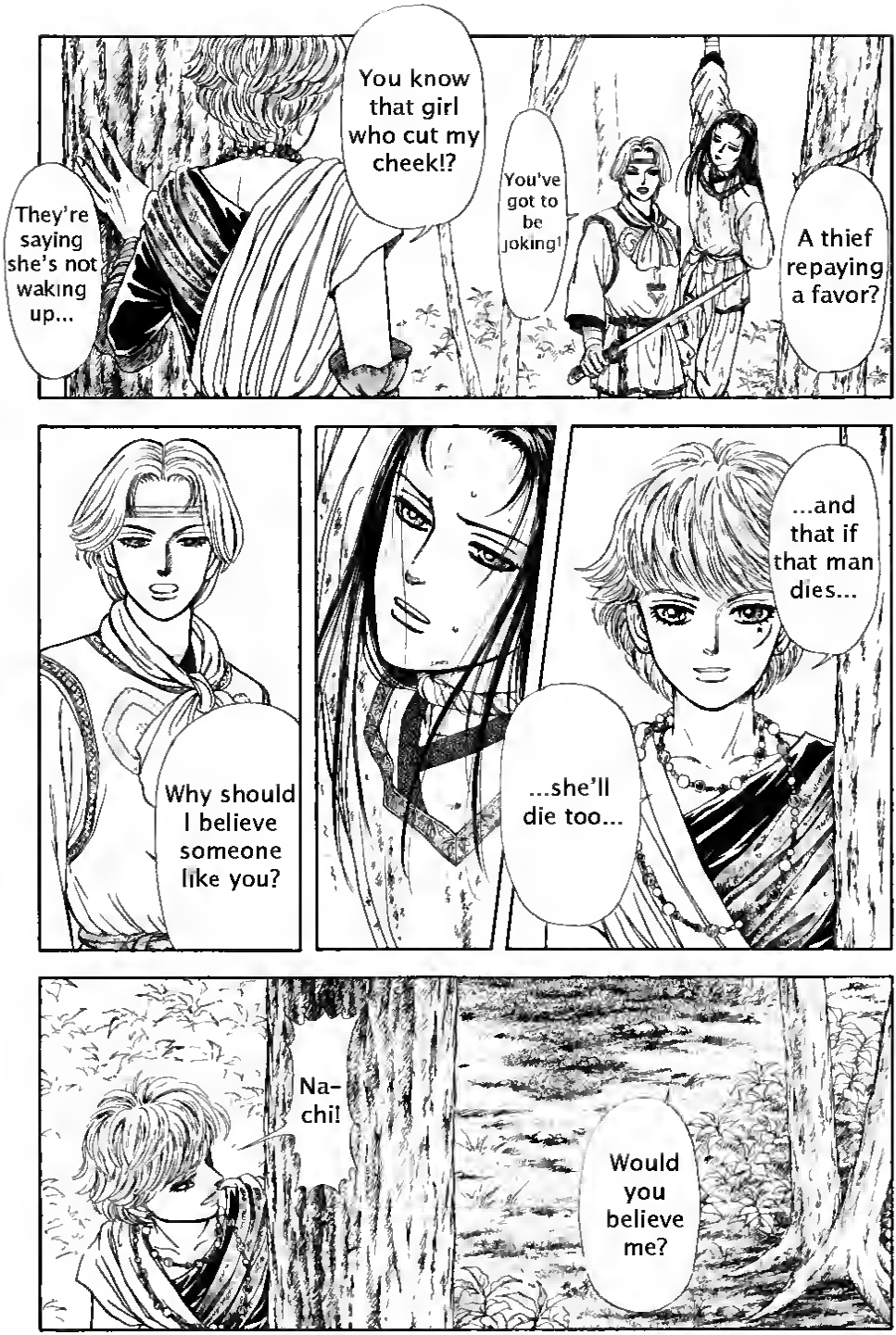
But we're just getting to the good part!
Just go and see!
Go check it out!
Something's going on at the edge of the forest.
Tsk!
Save some of the fun for us!


I brought you here...
...your life is valuable enough that Nachi wants to take it.
It seems...
I see...
It was never my intention to interrogate you.
...to kill you...
Yoko has fallen into Kiyu's hands.
She'll eventually reveal everything herself.

Of course, taking the life of someone like you is like drinking a fine wine...
I'm going to kill you because Nachi wants to take your life.
I will rob him of whatever he desires.
What? Are you not even going to raise an eyebrow?
...not that I plan on passing them on.
...I'll listen to your final words...
To show my gratitude for this pleasure...
I am...

...not... permit ted...
...to fight... against fate
If this...
...is my... fate...
...I... cannot... fight it...
Do as ...
...you will.

SHING
...finishing it off will be just as fun!
A truly rare wine.
I wanted to savor it slowly, but I'm afraid...
WHIZ
WHIZ
WHACK
WHACK


They're saying she's not waking up...
You know that girl who cut my cheek!?
You've got to be joking!
A thief repaying a favor?
Why should I believe someone like you?
...she'll die too...
...and that if that man dies...
Na-chi!
Would you believe me?

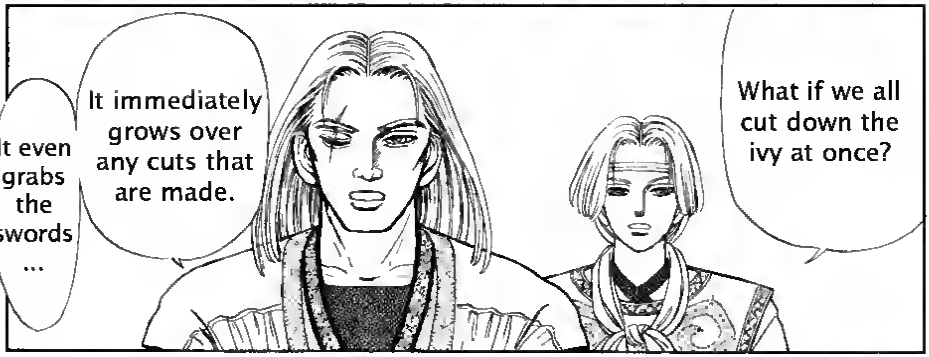
...proves that she is Toko...
...Toko. This strange event...
I mean ...
Something strange is happening to Yoko.
Nothing more, nothing less!
She's Yoko.
Oh, come on.
HEHE
Everyone has a weak-ness...
That pretty boy's eyes change color whenever Yoko's name comes up...
You don't need to tell me.
Go see for yourself.

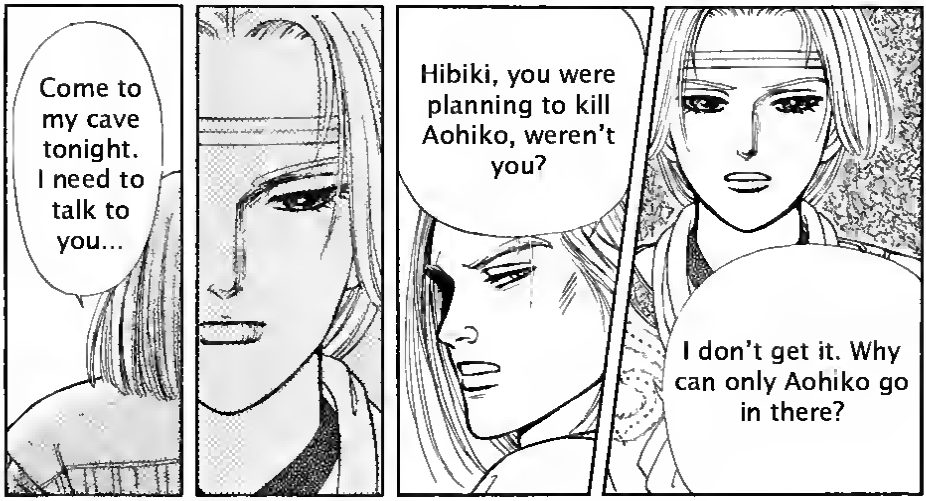
THUD
SLASH
UHH
You were hoping to die ...
...weren't you? You wanted to set Toko free even if it meant killing yourself rather than living as a burden on her.

One day you'll get your wish.
But remember this!
I am the one who will grant it to you!
I, who have killed you over and over again in my dreams!
Until that day, you must live, wasting away from illness.

I did it because I heard you wanted to take his life.
Hey, Nachi!
I didn't save that guy to repay him or anything.
Despi-cable...
... woman.
DASH
HM

MUAH♥
That's why we're perfect for each other!
Wha !?
Bea-tit!
Don't ever show your face again!
As long as I can be your dream girl!
I don't care if I'm despi-cable!


It even grabs the swords ...
It immediately grows over any cuts that are made.
What if we all cut down the ivy at once?


Come to my cave tonight. I need to talk to you...
Hibiki, you were planning to kill Aohiko, weren't you?
I don't get it. Why can only Aohiko go in there?

The sky... is so beauti-ful ...
The green... the autumn colors..
...the rain...
..the wind...
...the sun-light ...

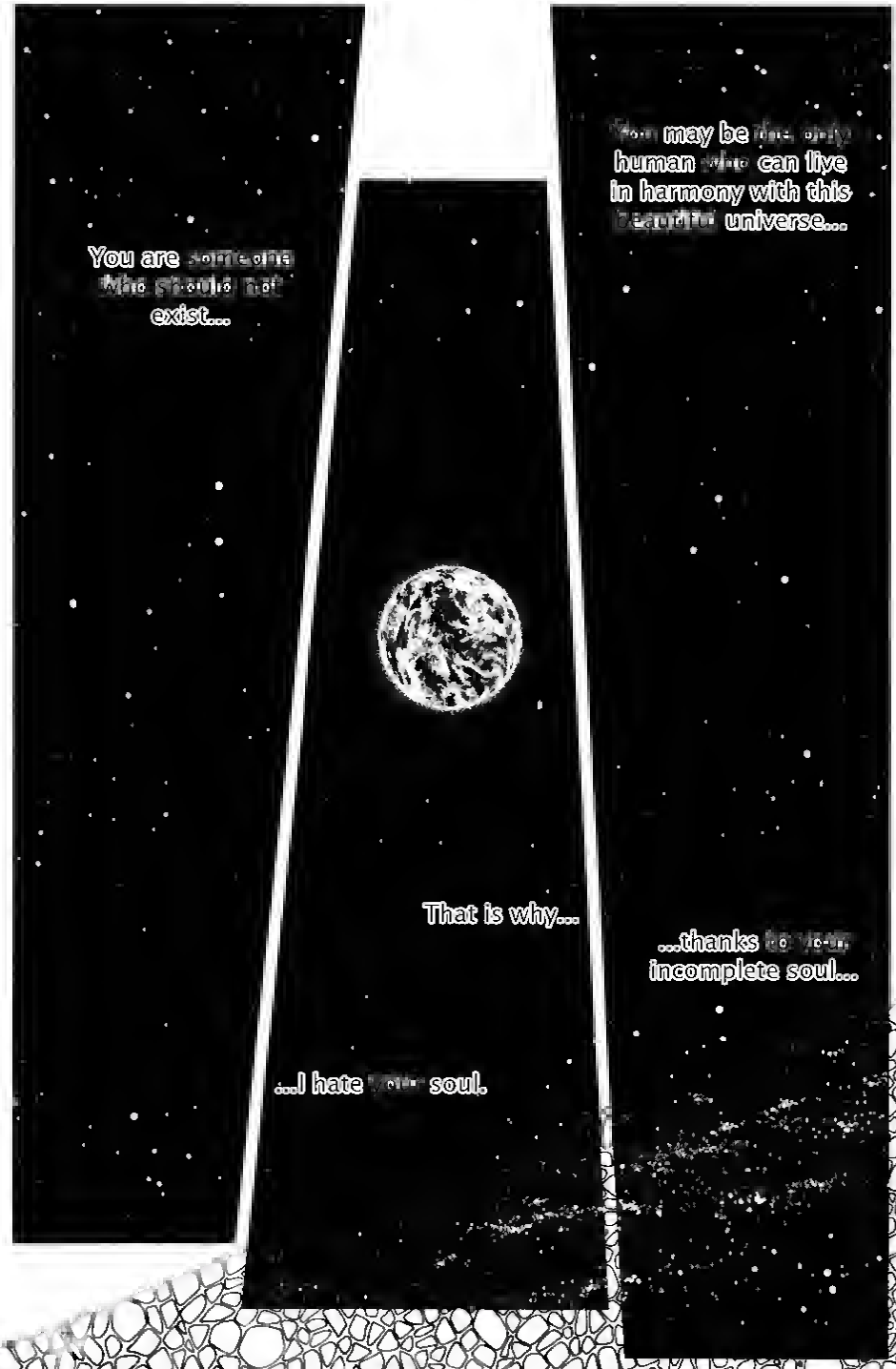
Why are... there...
...hu- mans...
It's all... so... beautiful. Why...
...on this... earth?
Our existence... alone... makes us unhappy...
Humans are... unhap- py...

A soul that has never been wounded doesn't have the right.
...have the right to pity people.
You don't ...
You just sympathize with others and take the sorrow of being human as your own...
If... I...
...wanted to kill...
...I could... without hesitation.

...all alone...

So your soul soars freely through heaven and earth searching for that missing, fallen piece...

An incomplete soul...

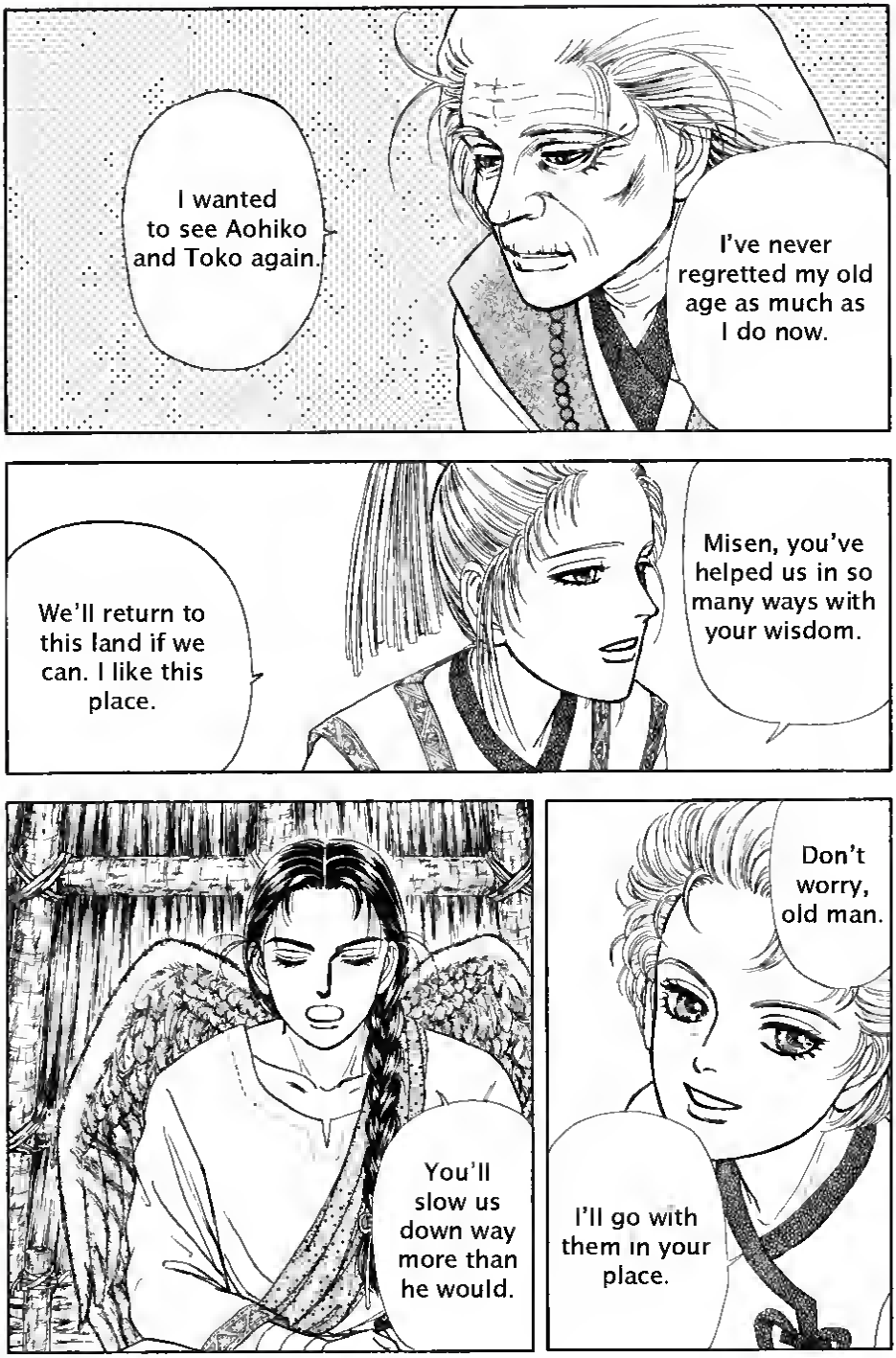

You are someone who should not exist...
That is why...
...I hate your soul.
You may be the only human who can live in harmony with this beautiful universe...
...thanks to your incomplete soul...

Katsura...

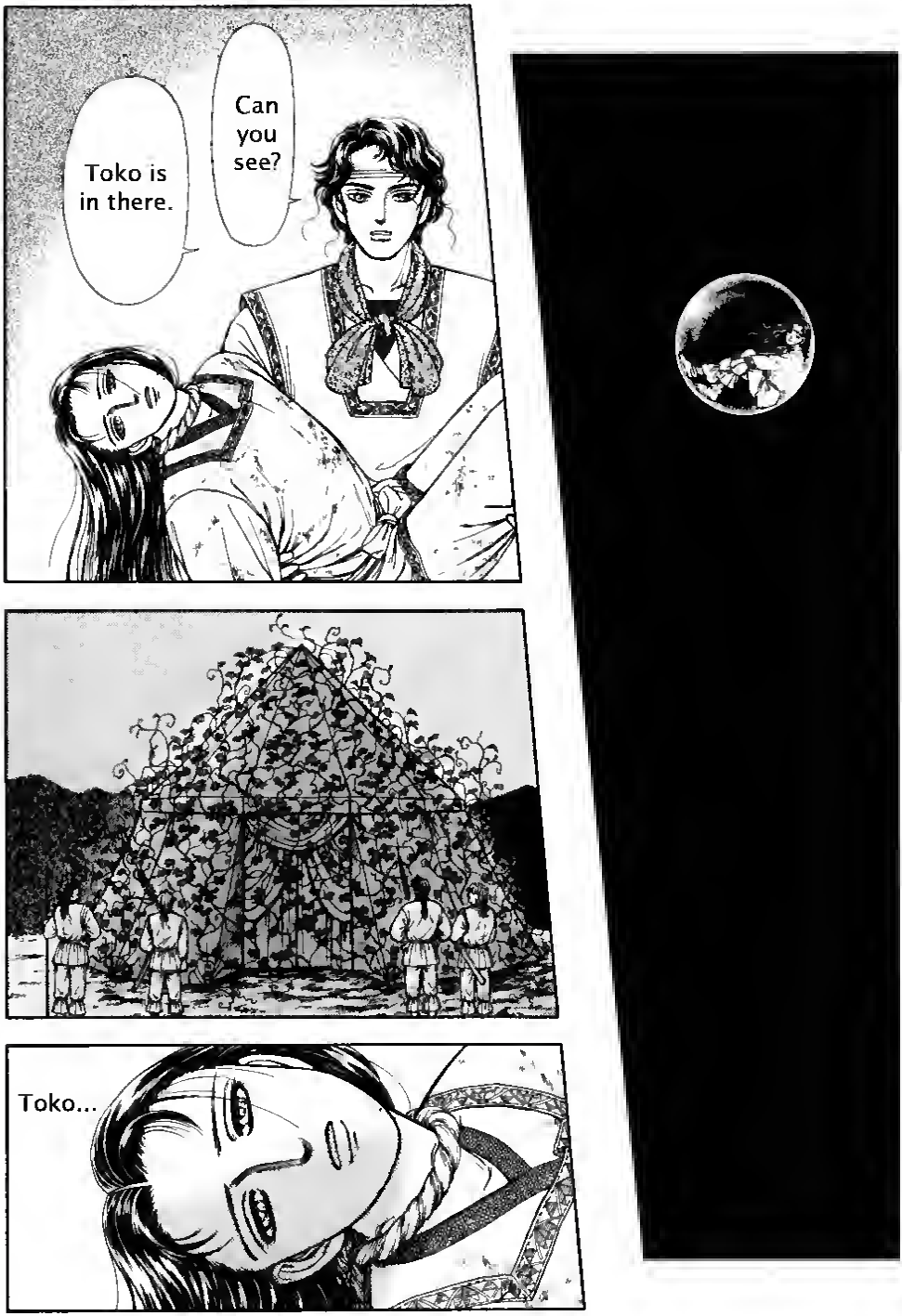
If the man you fell in love with...

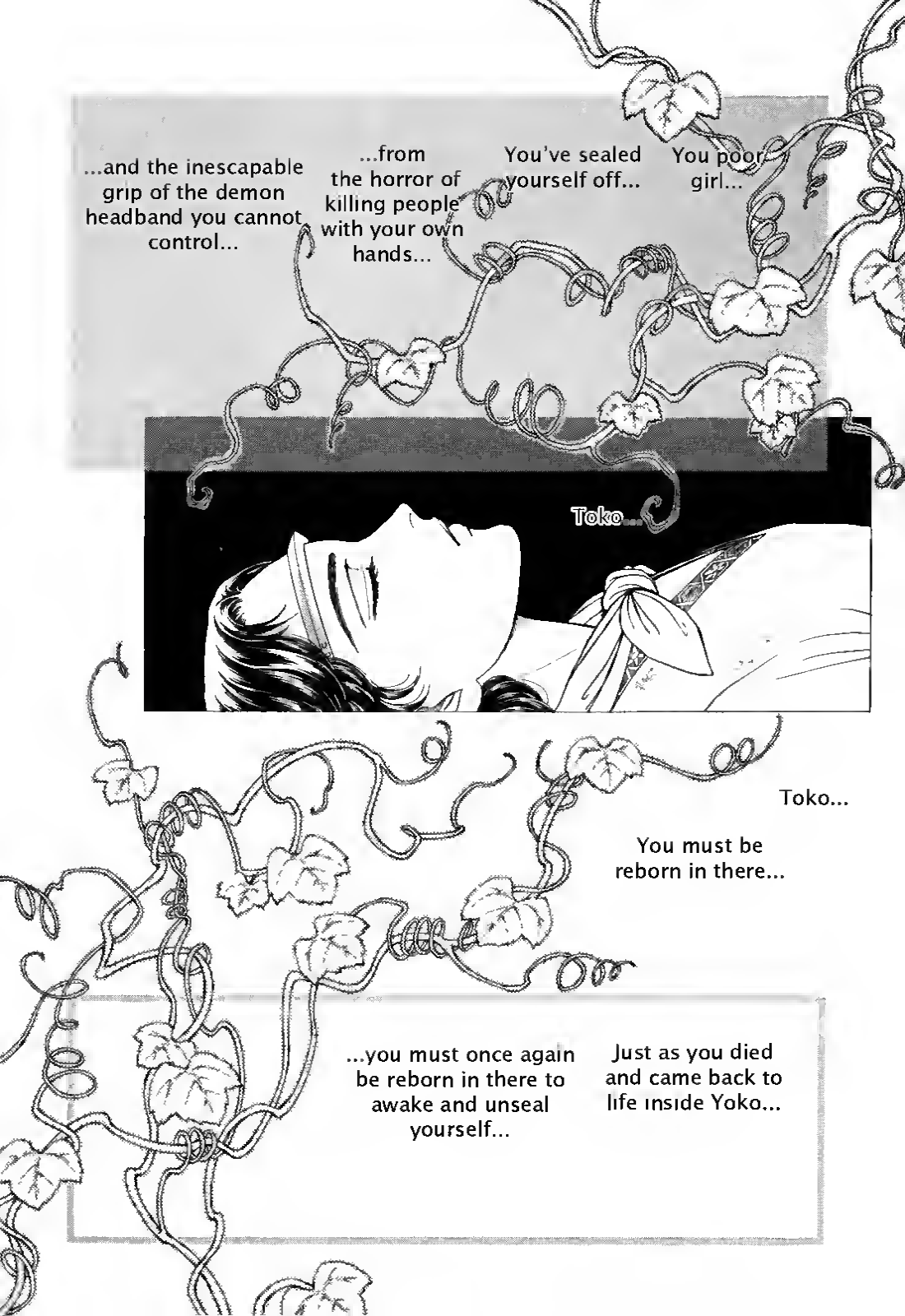
...had not been this man...

So you're staying in Isana, Misen...?
Fuji is too far for an old man like me.
I'd just slow everyone down.
About all I can do is pass down the mantras here in Isana on behalf of the Oracle.


I wanted to see Aohiko and Toko again.
I've never regretted my old age as much as I do now.
We'll return to this land if we can. I like this place.
Misen, you've helped us in so many ways with your wisdom.
You'll slow us down way more than he would.
I'll go with them in your place.
Don't worry, old man.

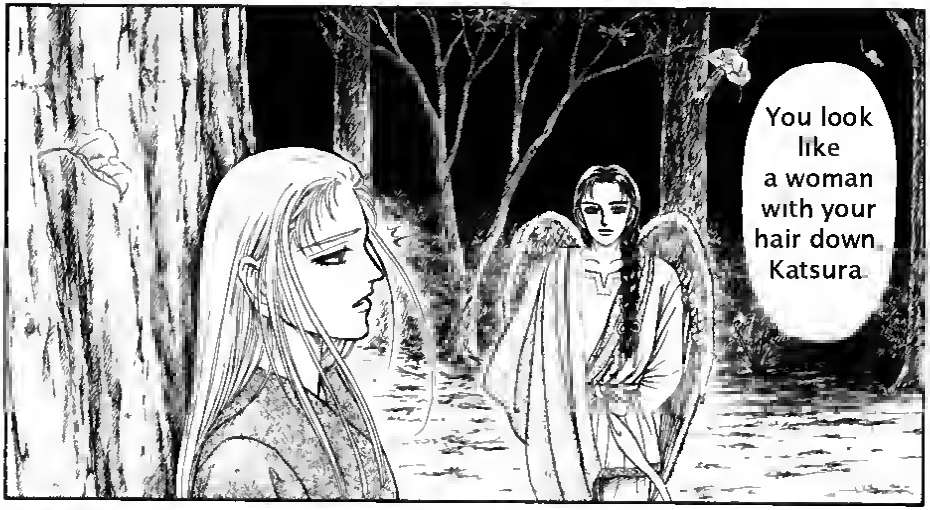
What's wrong, Takaya !?
You're in an unusually bad mood.
I-I'm not gonna slow anyone down.
Let's leave tomorrow!
I can't sit still any longer.
I have a strong feeling that Toko is calling me.

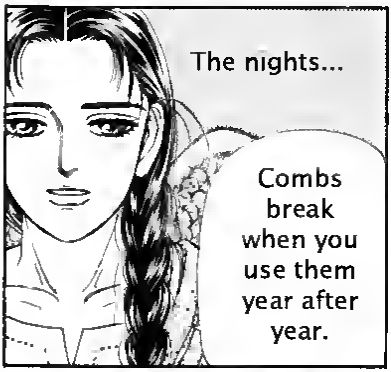

Can you see?
Toko is in there.
Toko...

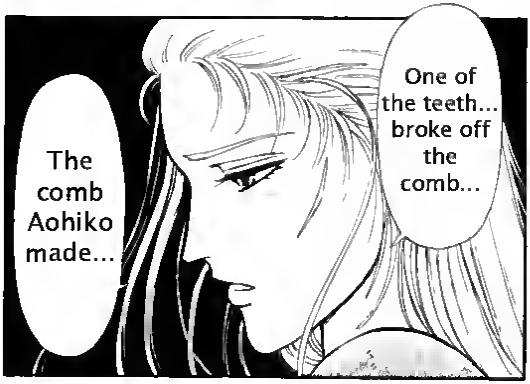

...and the inescapable grip of the demon headband you cannot control...
...from the horror of killing people with your own hands...
You've sealed yourself off...
You poor girl...
Toko...
Toko...
You must be reborn in there...
...you must once again be reborn in there to awake and unseal yourself...
Just as you died and came back to life inside Yoko...

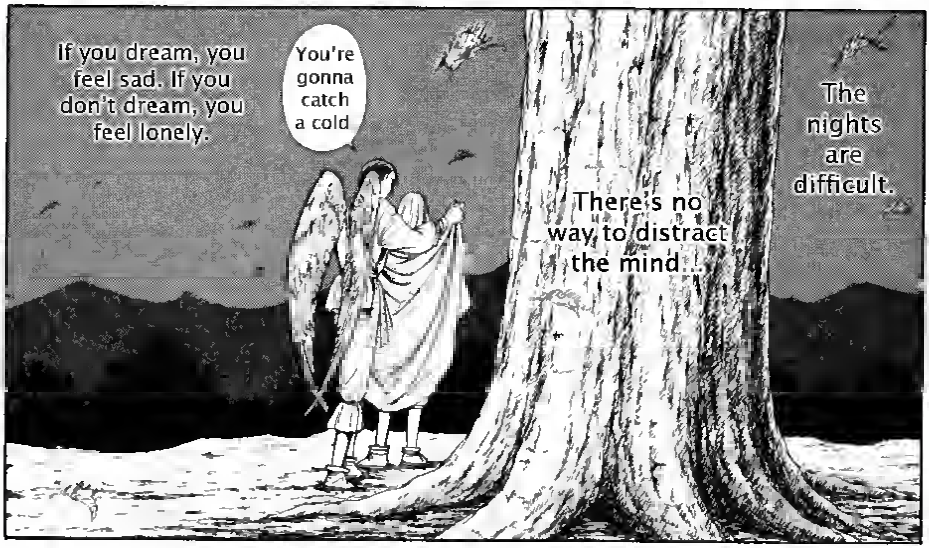
I wonder...

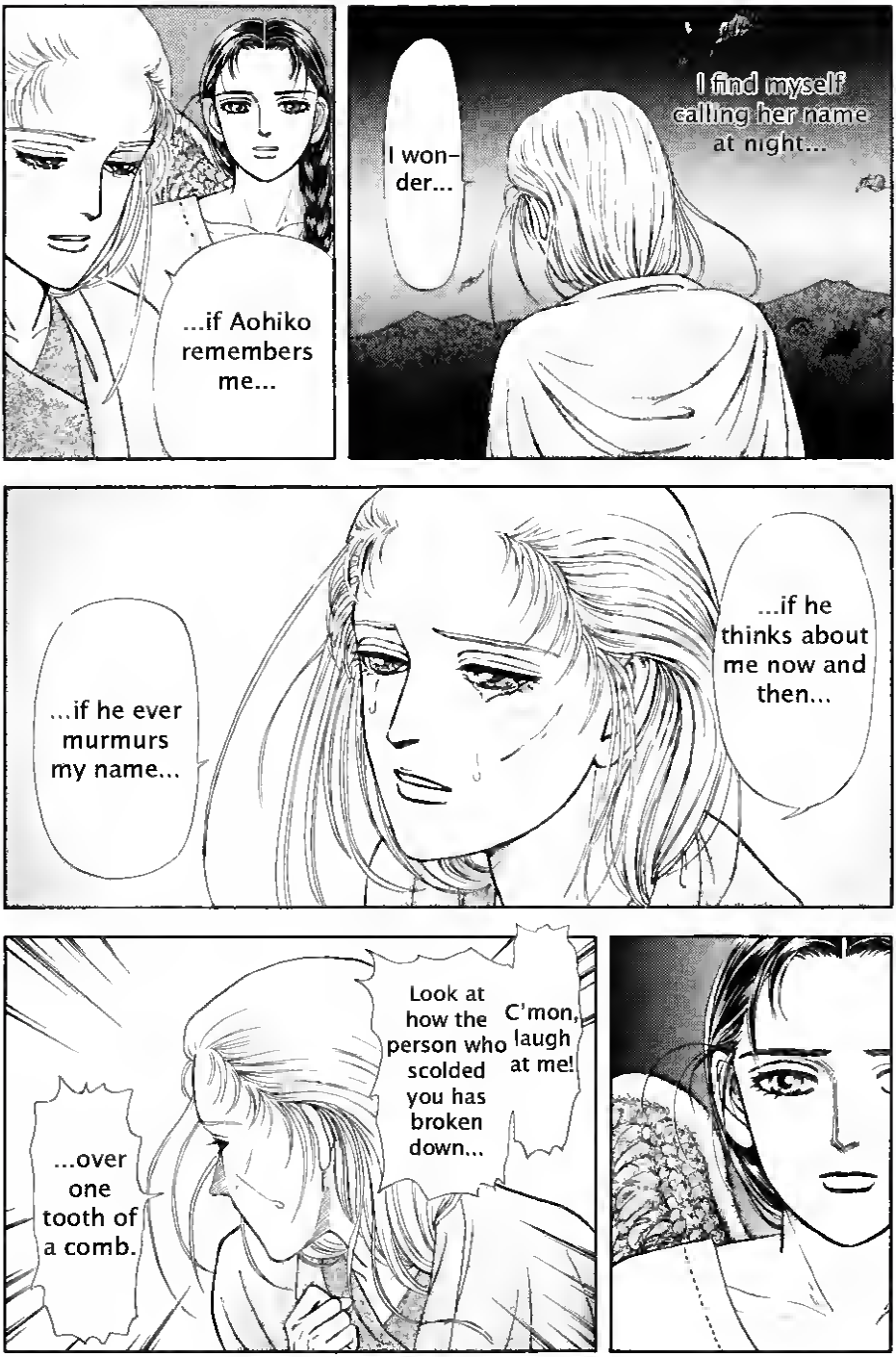
...if it is your destiny
to be reborn again
and again like this...


You look like a woman with your hair down Katsura


The nights...
Combs break when you use them year after year.

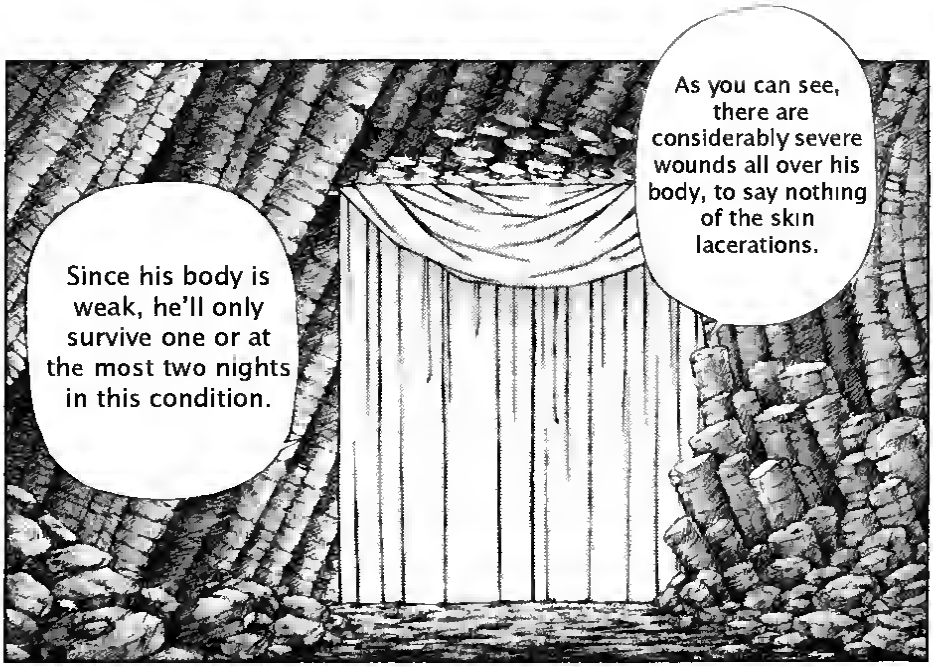

The comb Aohiko made...
One of the teeth... broke off the comb...


If you dream, you feel sad. If you don't dream, you feel lonely.
You're gonna catch a cold
There's no way to distract the mind...
The nights are difficult.


...if Aohiko remembers me...
I won-der...
I find myself calling her name at night...
...if he ever murmurs my name...
...if he thinks about me now and then...
...over one tooth of a comb.
Look at how the person who scolded you has broken down...
C'mon, laugh at me!

Misen told me...
Can you hear Toko's voice?
I can't hear it! I can't hear Aohiko's voice!
Listen, Katsura!
Katsu-ra...
...he was trying to survive...
...that when Aohiko went out to meet Kiyu's army...
He wanted to live to see you again.
... for you, Katsura ...

Aohiko doesn't express his feelings on his face or in his words...
...but I know him.
He always thinks about you.
He cares about you very much, Katsura.

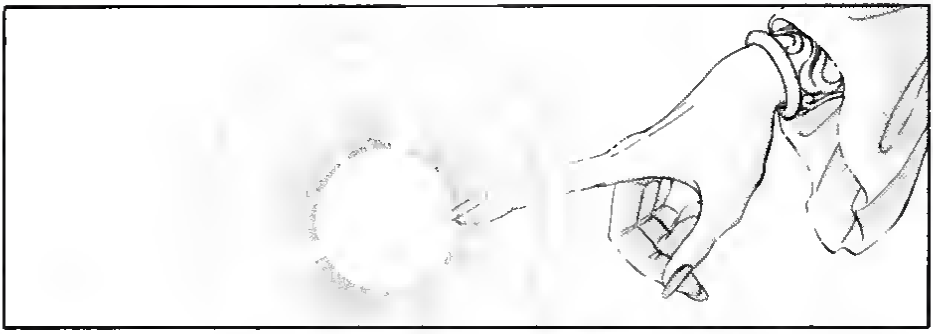

As you can see, there are considerably severe wounds all over his body, to say nothing of the skin lacerations.
Since his body is weak, he'll only survive one or at the most two nights in this condition.

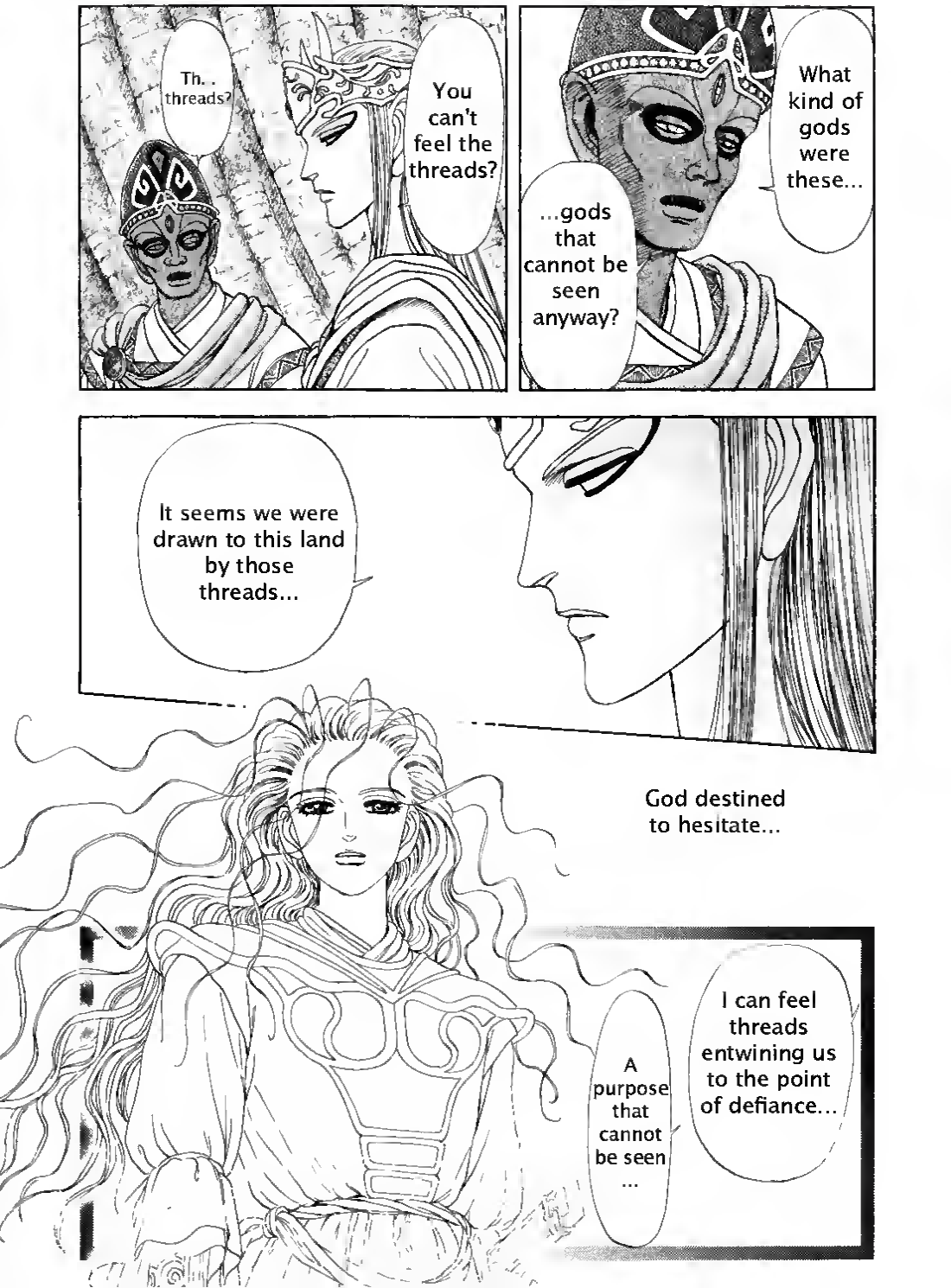
Even before when he was dying, not even Kiyu's power was enough to fully heal him...
I didn't order him to kill the man...

If I heal someone so close to death... I might...
Are you telling me to save this man's life?
...so the responsi-bility lies with you ...
You are the one who gave the order to Hibiki...
...it's too much to ask a demon god like me to save a demigod follower...
Even if it's to save your beloved Yoko, Lord Kiyu...
This man is a follower of the gods that cannot be seen.
He was with Risson but never swore his allegiance to him...
Have you forgotten what Nachi said?
This man is not a follower of the demigods...

Lord Kiyu, you say you came to this small island country in search of new wisdom...
...but all we have gained is glimpses of something like that...
The gods that cannot be seen only exist in legends now!
That's even worse!
I fail to see how the people of this land are any different from those in foreign lands.
Unless it can prolong our existence, we have no real need for it.
How great can the wisdom of the gods that cannot be see be!?
They either follow the demigods and fall under the spell of the good...
...or follow the demon gods and become drunk on the pleasure of evil...
It's one or the other!
Our superiority proves that there is more life force to be found in evil!

People want gods because they want superhuman power, and to be able to vacillate between good and evil...
Do you still... not see?
The gods that cannot be seen pose a serious threat to us...
Those who do not seek power and are swayed by neither good nor evil do not need gods!
Once he is healed, I will draw out his true nature and captivate him with the pleasures of evil.
Fine!
I will heal this man.
...

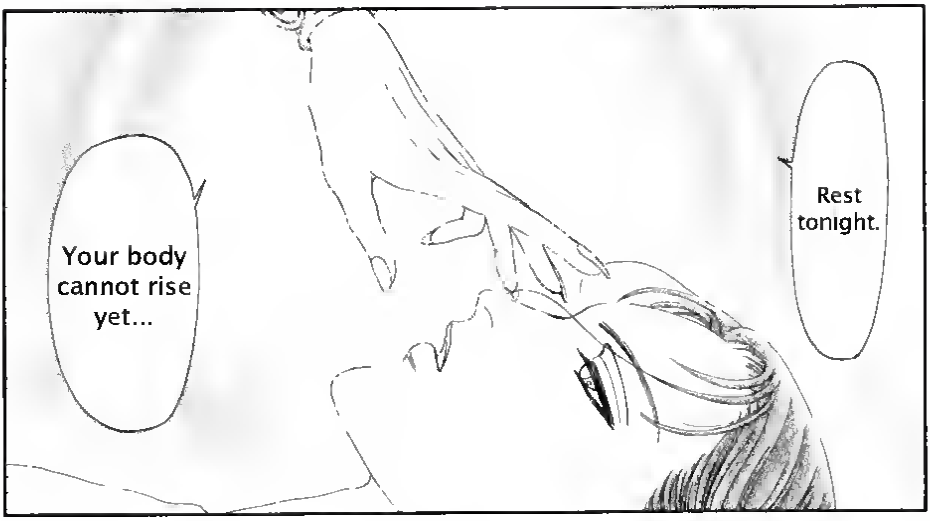



Th.. threads?
You can't feel the threads?
What kind of gods were these...
...gods that cannot be seen anyway?
It seems we were drawn to this land by those threads...
God destined to hesitate...
I can feel threads entwining us to the point of defiance...
A purpose that cannot be seen ...

Ah!
Ahh!
L-Lord Kiyu!

FSSSH
Oh...

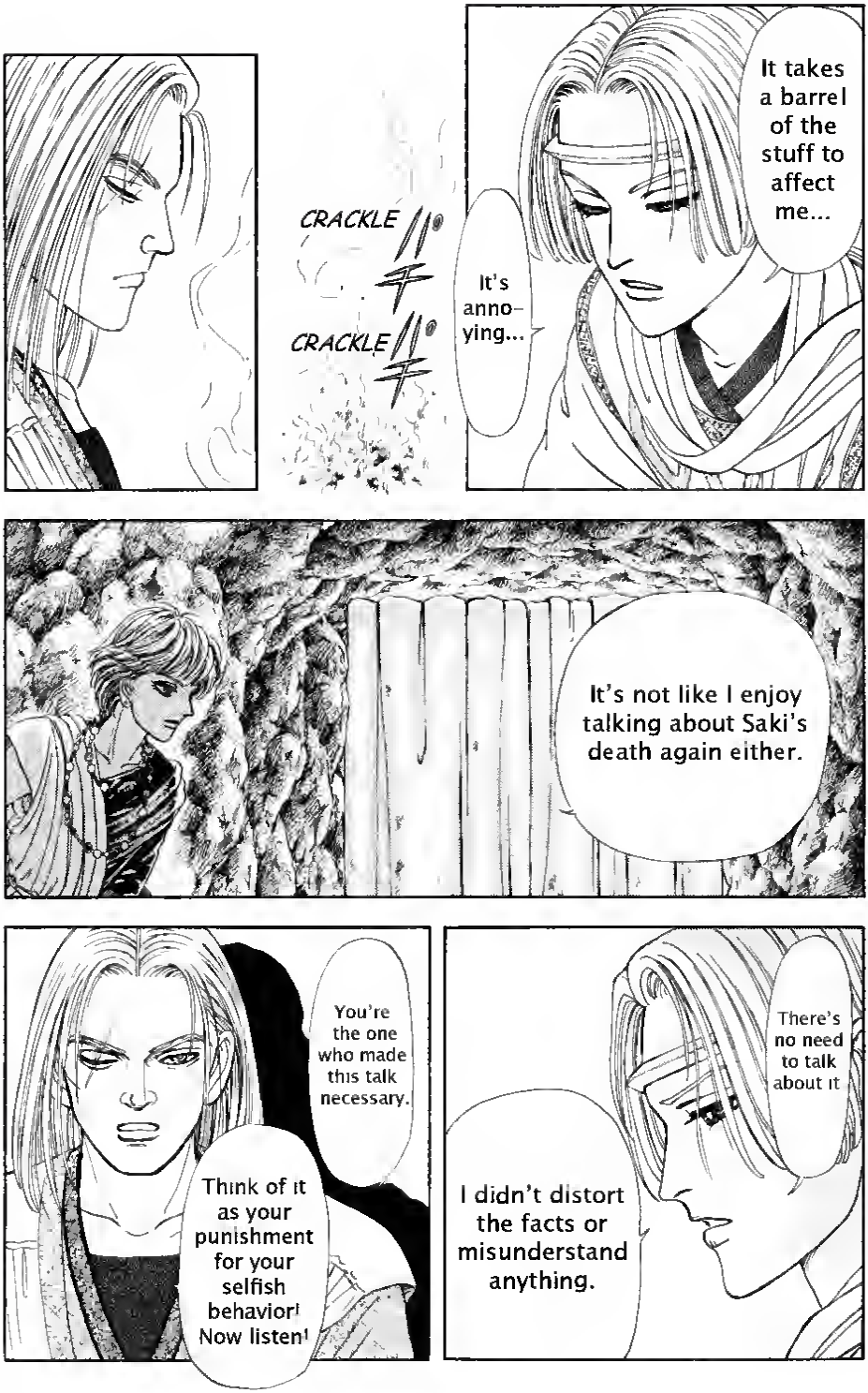
...of the gods that cannot be seen before we meet the same fate...
We must acquire the wis-dom ...
W-we must hurry ...
...without knowing what it is we are looking for...
And we will run around...
Unh ...
Ahh ..



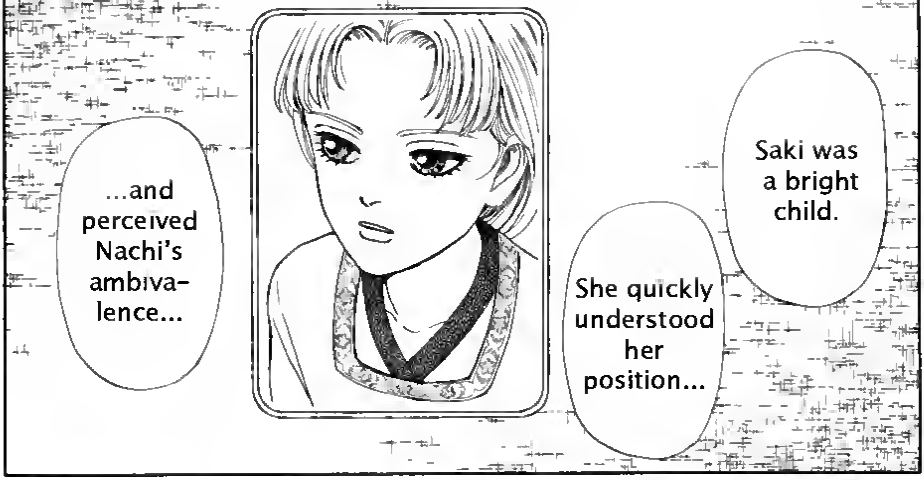
There's something different...

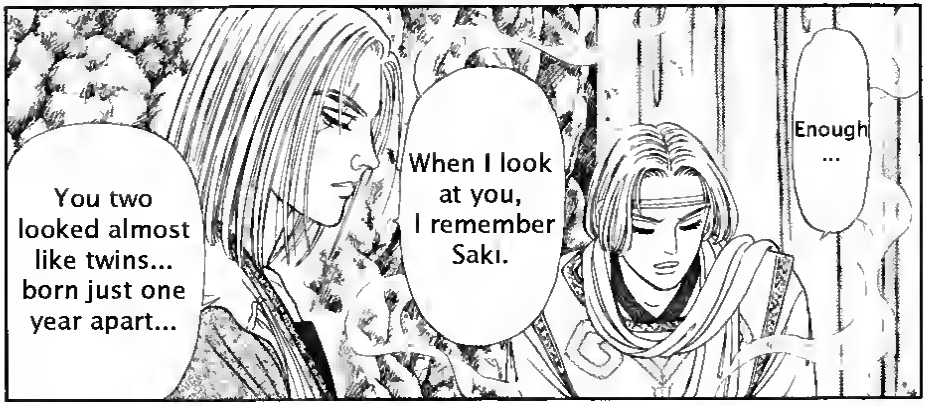
It's cold... but soft like freshly fallen snow...
...about Kiyu's aura...
This snow never melts...
This snow is colder than ice...
It's as if its embrace beckons me to surrender to a sweet death.

CRACKLE
Come in!
Hibiki!?
CRACKLE
You can handle a drink, right?
Here...
Sit down!
Want a drink?

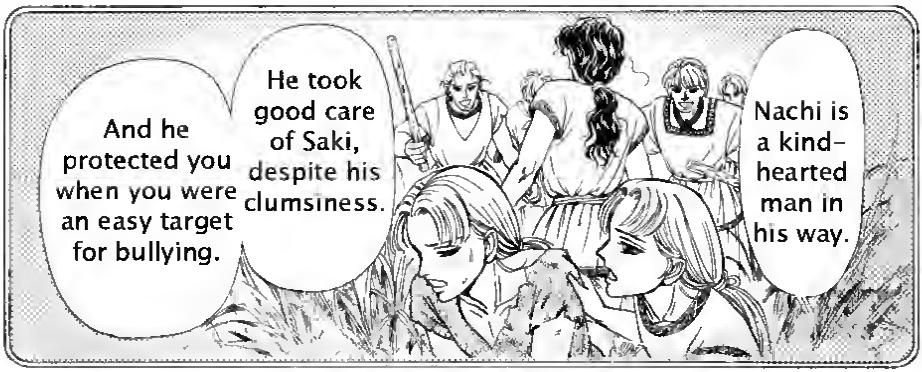

It takes a barrel of the stuff to affect me...
It's anno-ying...
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
It's not like I enjoy talking about Saki's death again either.
You're the one who made this talk necessary.
Think of it as your punishment for your selfish behavior! Now listen!
There's no need to talk about it
I didn't distort the facts or misunderstand anything.

His swordsmanship already surpassed that of many adults...
Nachi was thirteen...
You and Saki met Nachi before you had turned ten, right?
This was a source of both unbearable agony and maddening pleasure for Nachi.
He took many lives in battle because he was too skilled for his own good.
But Nachi always felt ambivalent about life under the demon gods...
...and, obviously, to tie you down...
After Saki was kidnapped, she was allowed to live to tie Nachi down...
His ambivalence is what killed Saki.


...and perceived Nachi's ambiva-lence...
She quickly understood her position...
Saki was a bright child.


You two looked almost like twins... born just one year apart...
When I look at you, I remember Saki.
Enough ...

Does Saki no longer live even in the memories of her true older brother?
You can't even remem-ber?
Stop!

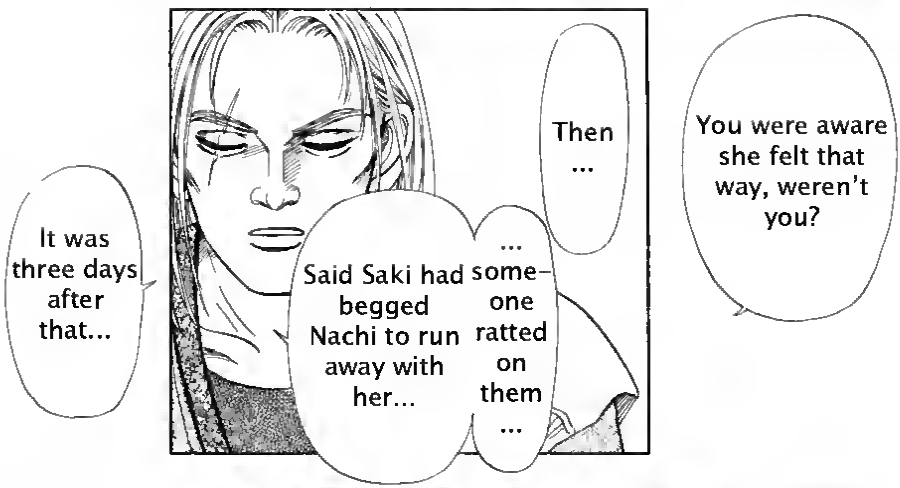

Nachi is a kind-hearted man in his way.
He took good care of Saki, despite his clumsiness.
And he protected you when you were an easy target for bullying.

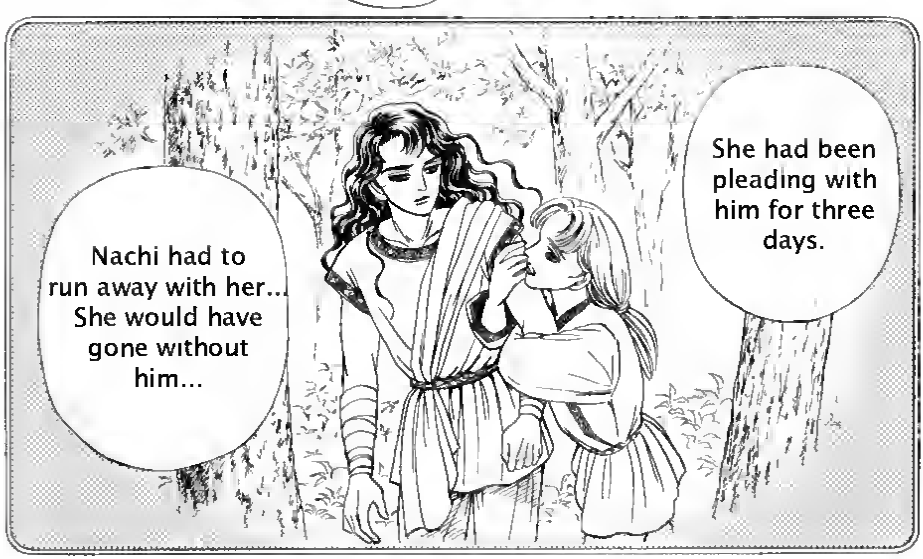
Over the next two years ...
...Saki grew strong and you picked up some skills under Nachi's care.

During that time, Saki continued to observe Nachi's ambivalence...
It was hard for her to be the chain that was tying him down.

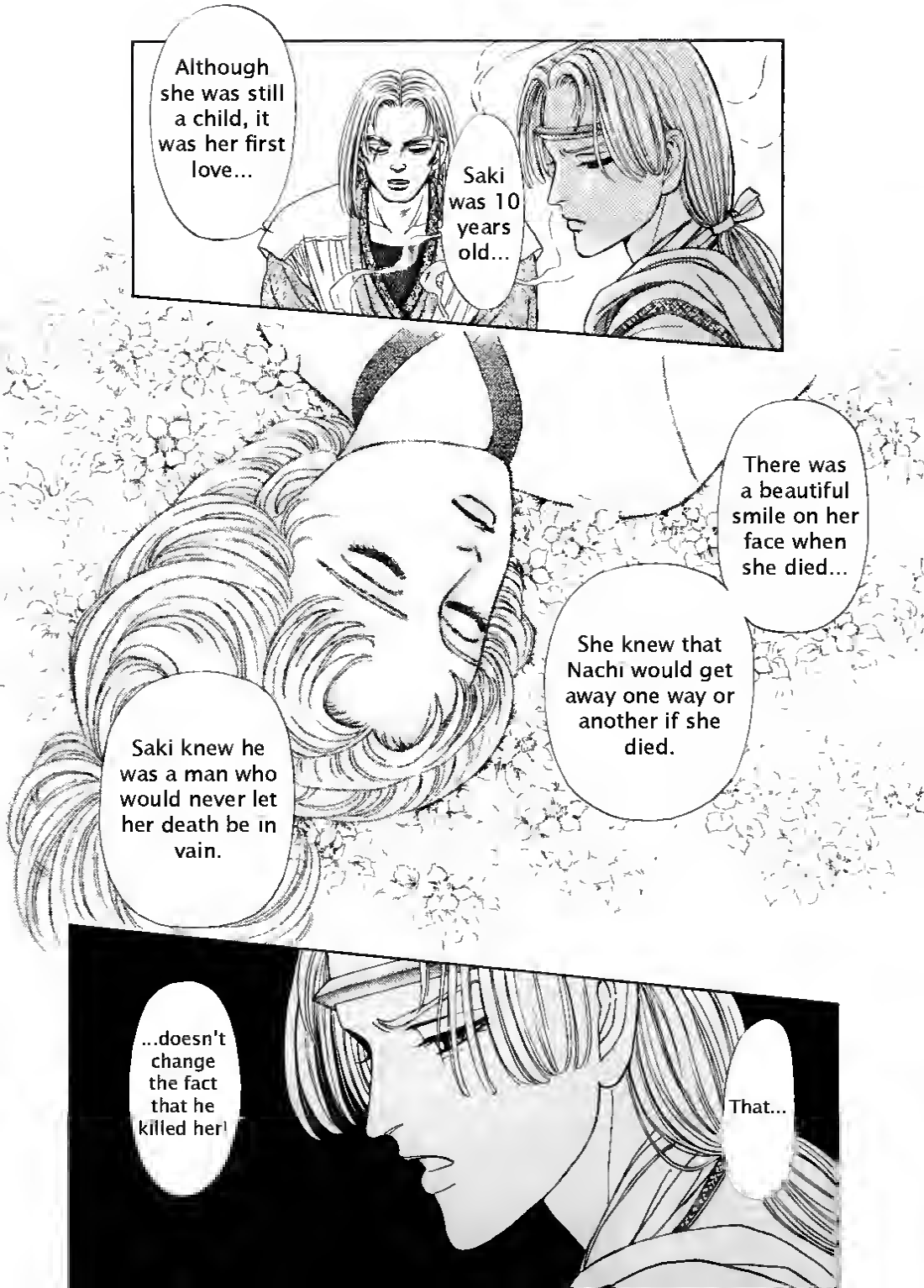
It was probably the rumor that a demon headband would soon be placed on Nachi's forehead...
...that drove Saki to her decision.

Saki didn't want Nachi to live out the rest of his days as a tool for killing...
Once fitted with a demon headband, he would have to remain Lord Kiyu's warrior until the day he died...


It was three days after that...
Said Saki had begged Nachi to run away with her...
... someone ratted on them ...
Then ...
You were aware she felt that way, weren't you?


Nachi had to run away with her... She would have gone without him...
She had been pleading with him for three days.

He left Saki's body behind...
He...
He cut off and discarded the person who had been his friend...
So he ran away...
Nachi must have intended to act as a shield for Saki to allow her to escape.
You surely don't!
You think Nachi's the kind of man who'd use a woman as a shield to escape?
As a result... she was struck by an arrow meant for Nachi.
But Saki wouldn't leave Nachi's side.


Although she was still a child, it was her first love...
Saki was 10 years old...
There was a beautiful smile on her face when she died...
She knew that Nachi would get away one way or another if she died.
Saki knew he was a man who would never let her death be in vain.
That...
...doesn't change the fact that he killed her!

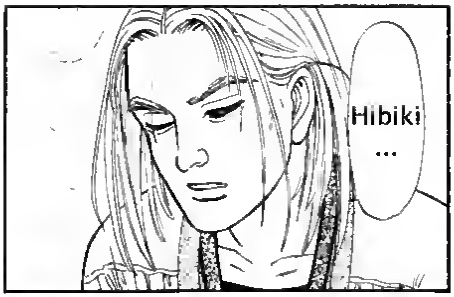
He switched from the demon gods to the demigods...
It doesn't change the fact that his ambivalence caused her death!
And then from the demigods back to the demon gods...
So what did Saki die for!?
That fact pains him...
Nachi beats himself up enough as it is...
So?

I don't care how it happened.
"Nachi killed Saki." The result is all that matters.
So you're telling me to forgive him...
...to not hate him!?
There something even more unpleasant I have to talk to you about.
You listen! It's why I called you here.
If I say it's the "real reason," you might hate me too...
Other... reason?
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
The other reason you hate Nachi...

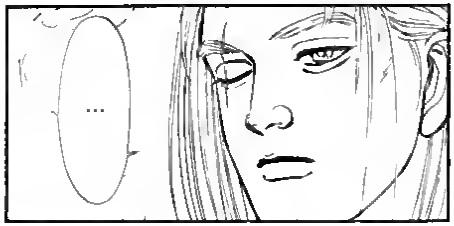
If you were Nachi, what would you have done?
...
Are you confident you could have helped two other people escape while fending off dozens of warriors?
Nachi didn't want to involve you and get you killed...
What... do you mean?
You said it's about results, not how you get there...
Yeah...

You hate Nachi for leaving you behind.
At that time, you trusted Nachi more than a friend or older brother.
Saki wasn't the only one who was drawn to Nachi.
He was the only person you smiled for without inhibition...
Stop!
You too fel t pure admira- tion...

Ease my burden ...?
That is not my intention.
I just want to ease your burden.
Are you trying ...
...to sully my name?
HEH
The Captain, of all people!
That's a good one!
HAHA-HAHA
Ease it?


Hibiki
...

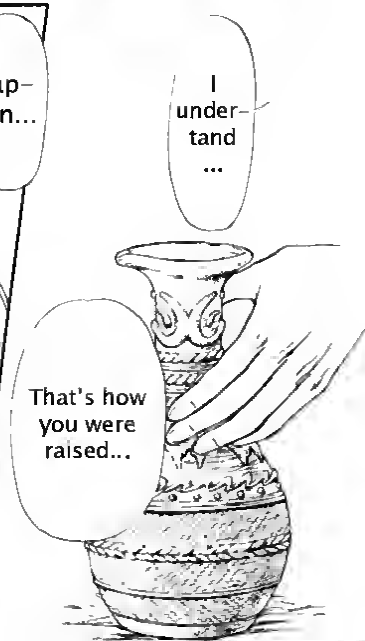
I'm enjoying my life just fine... Hatred is my source of joy!


...

I'll kill Nachi!
Nothing will bring me greater ease than that!

That's a good one, too. As if someone who'd lost himself had a true self to reveal.

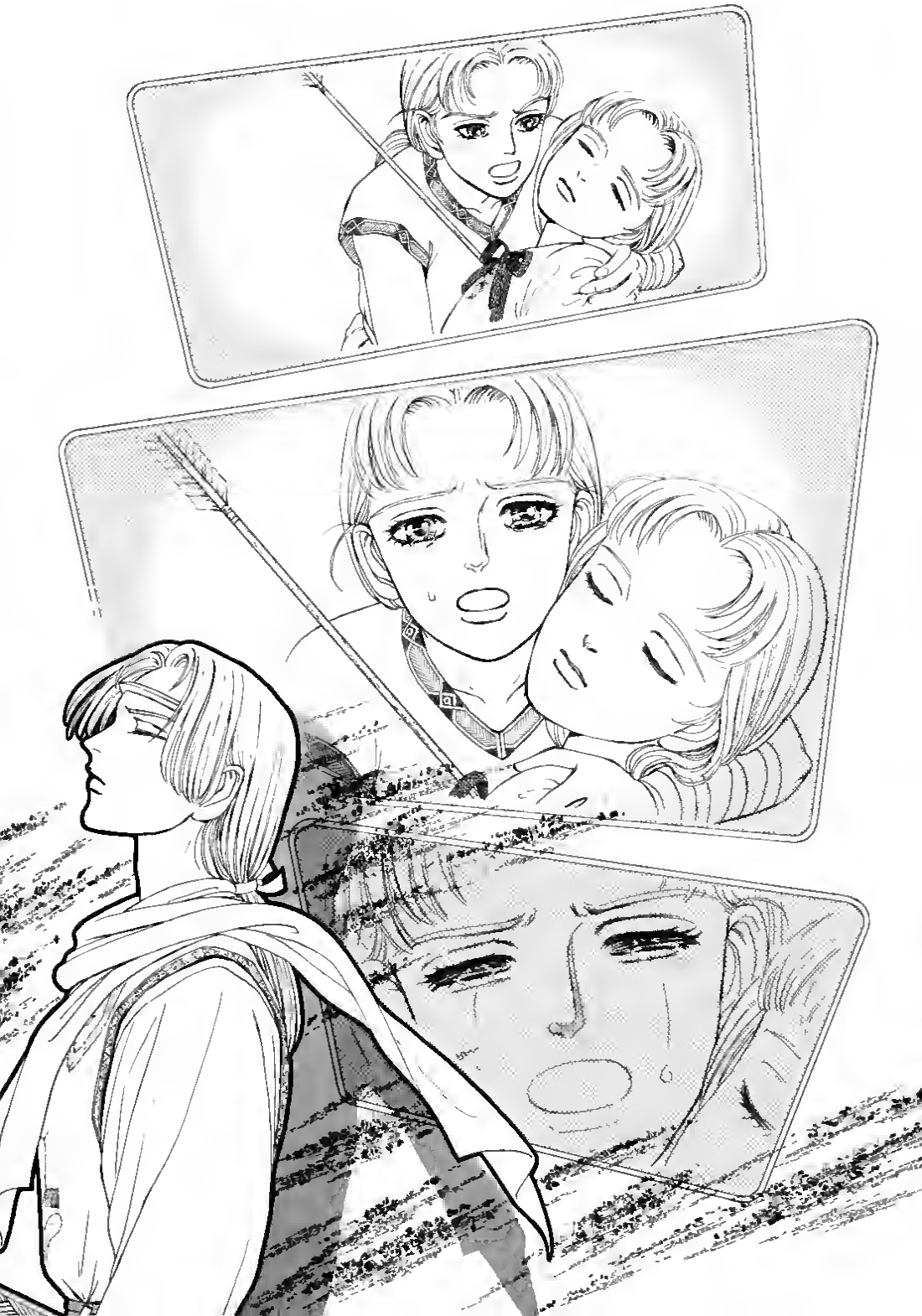
I'll start teasing you for your age.
Stop trying to open up and reveal your true self to me.
Captain...

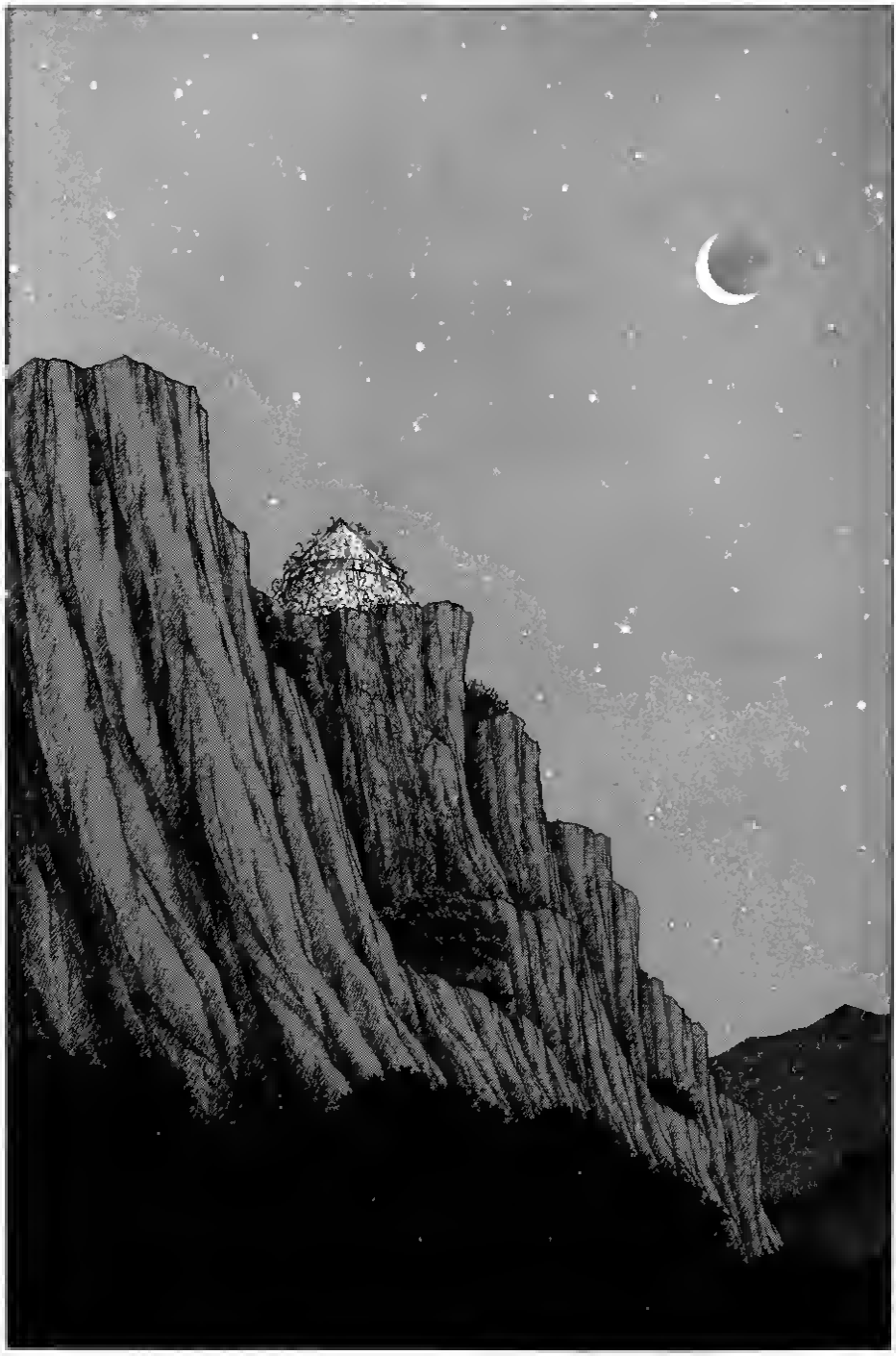

That's how you were raised...
I understand ...

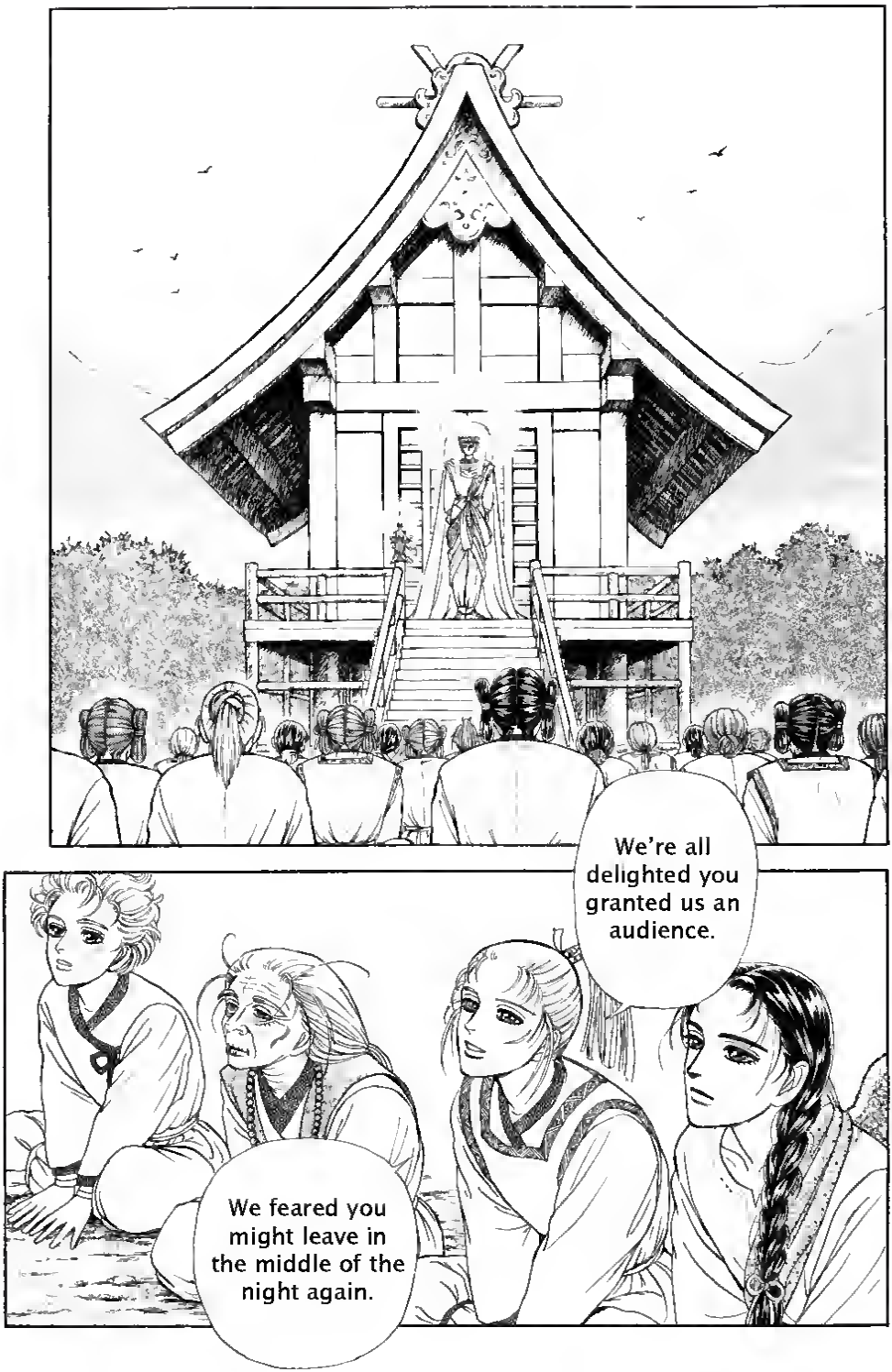
Huh .. an animal?
No...
Are you expecting any other guests tonight?
Whew ...
That was close!
But don't ever mess with Aohiko again.
I won't meddle any further in the conflict between you and Nachi.
Hibiki ...
That man's life has been placed in Nachi's hands.
Don't forget that.

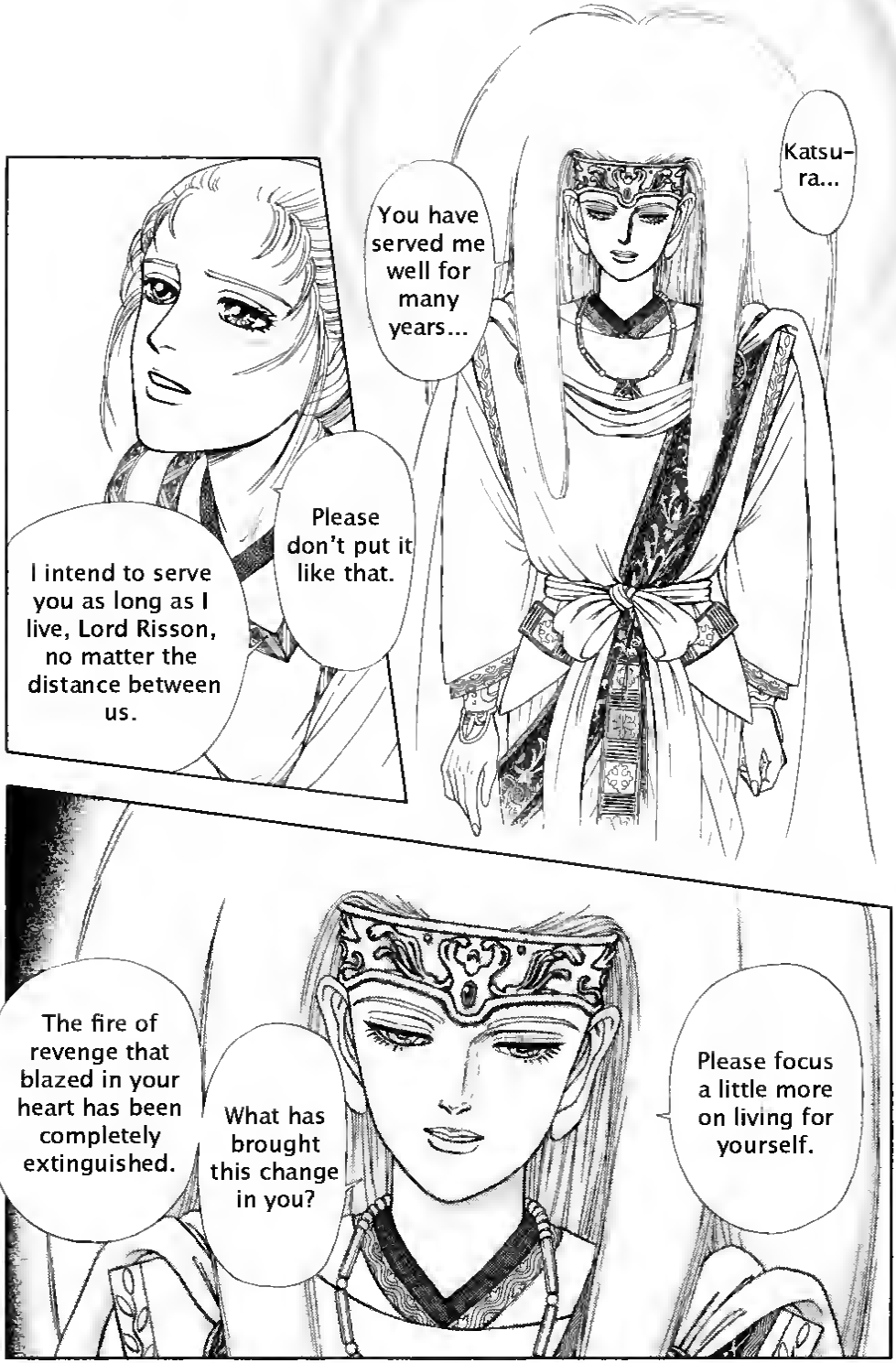
He's like a fine wine.
One sip can get you drunk ...
I thought he was just a hypocrite...
No words can describe him.
I will punish anyone who disobeys orders.
HE HE
That's more like it, Captain ...
It's because of the blood on your hands that I obey you...

You can't even remember?

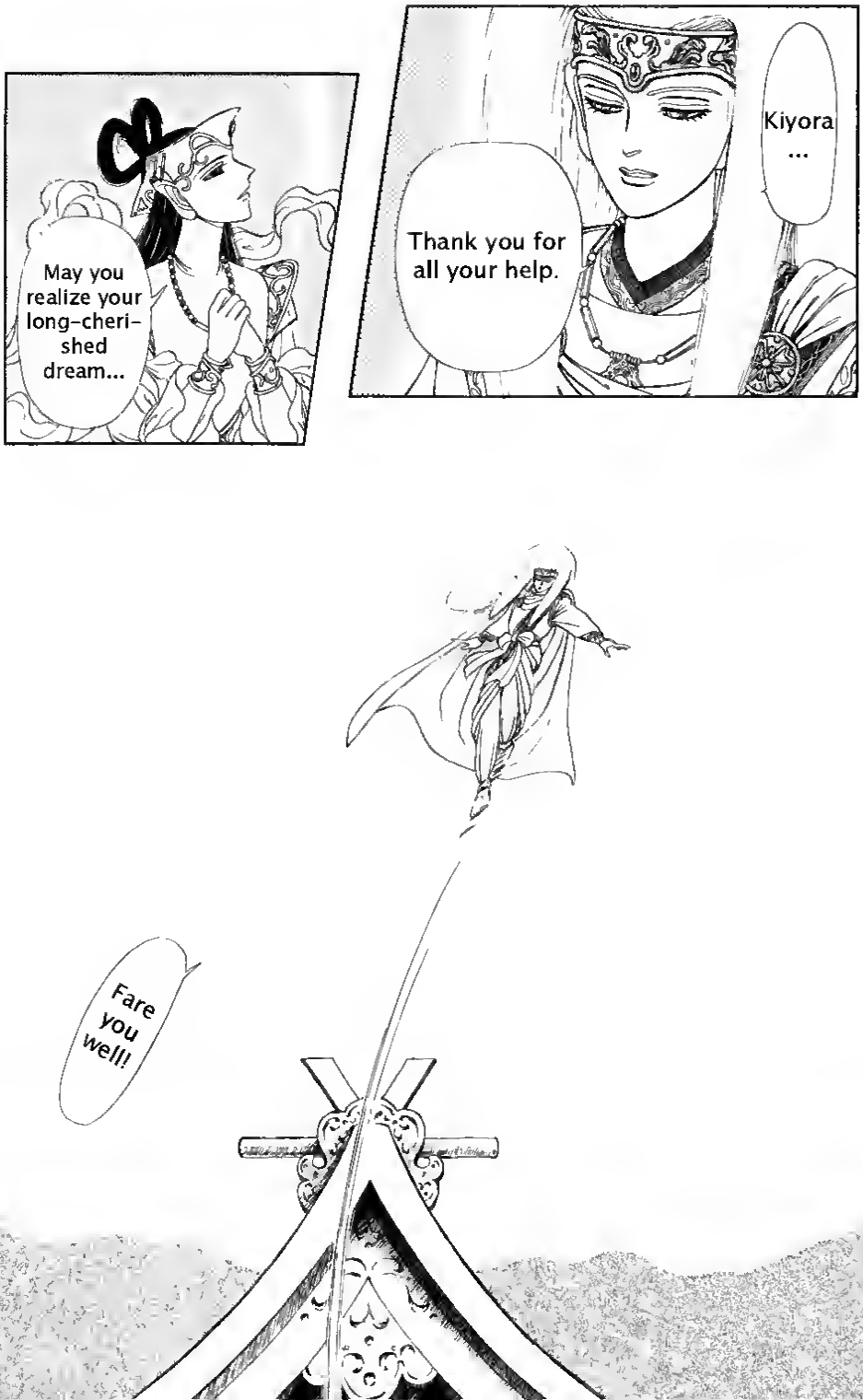




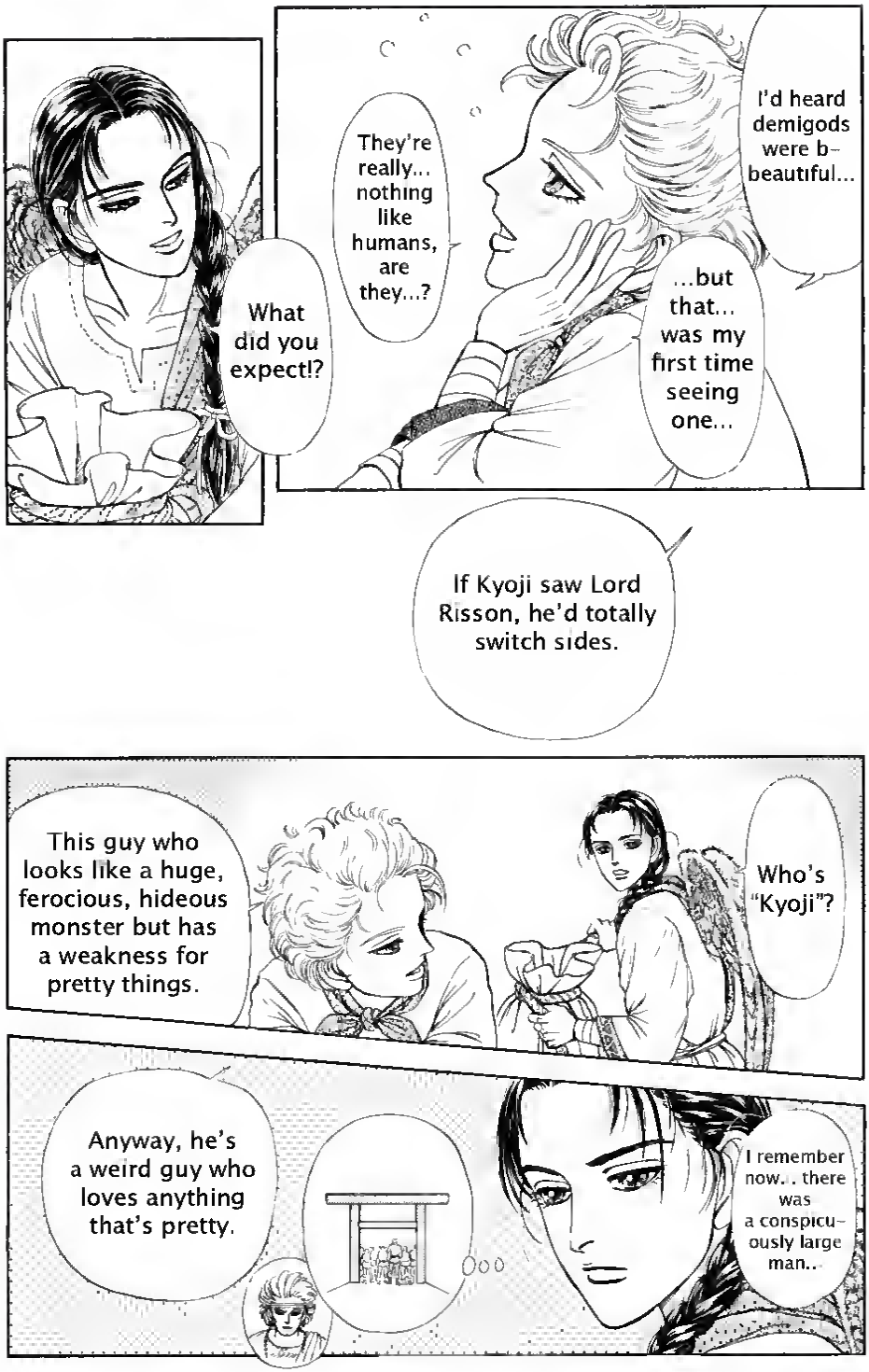

We're all delighted you granted us an audience.
We feared you might leave in the middle of the night again.

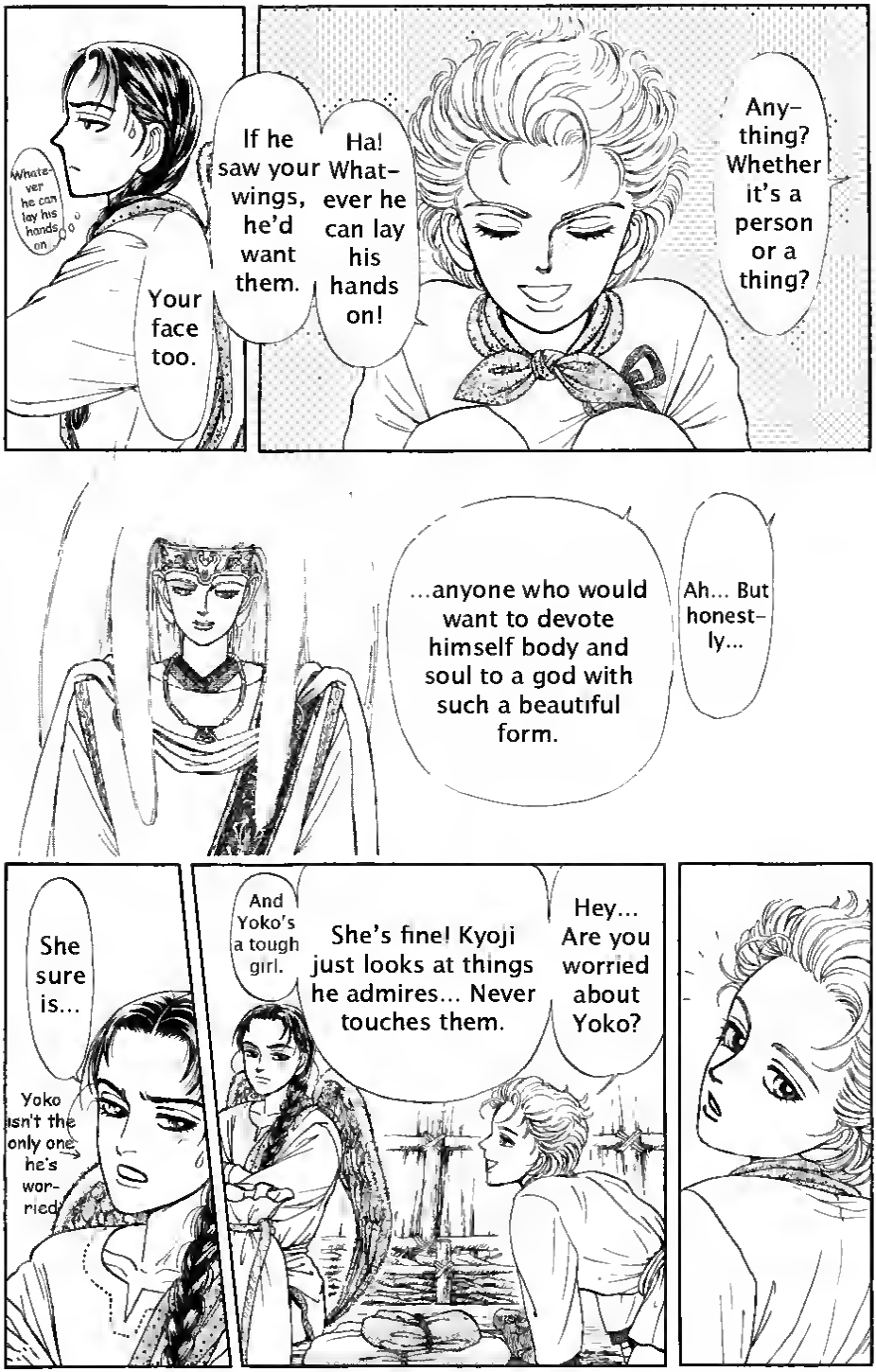

Katsu-
ra...
You have served me well for many years...
Please don't put it like that.
I intend to serve you as long as I live, Lord Risson, no matter the distance between us.
Please focus a little more on living for yourself.
What has brought this change in you?
The fire of revenge that blazed in your heart has been completely extinguished.

A-Aohi-ko...
Aohiko's words... changed me...
Then ...
...what you need is Aohiko... not a god.
Taka-ya...
Take care of every-one.
May we meet again on Towada...

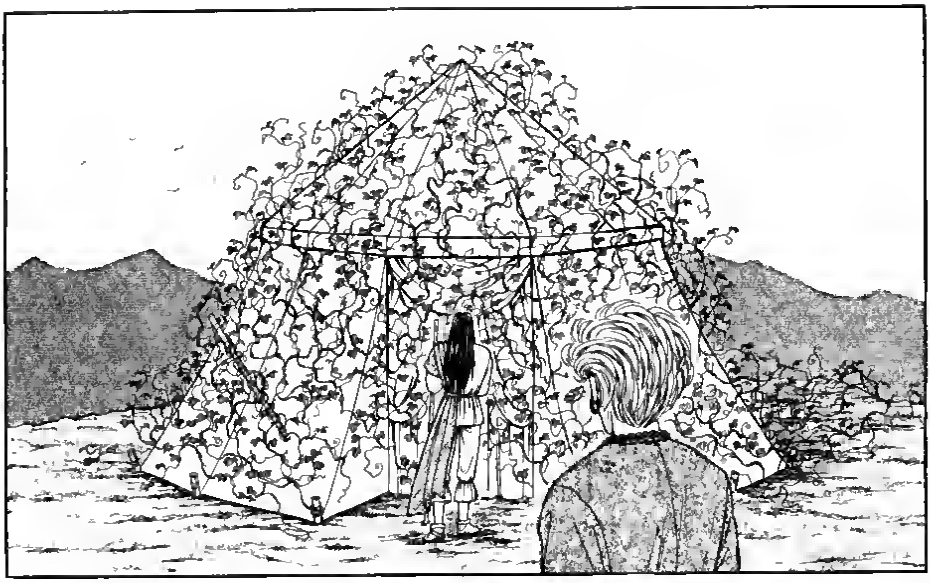

May you realize your long-cherished dream...
Thank you for all your help.
Kiyora...
Fare you well!

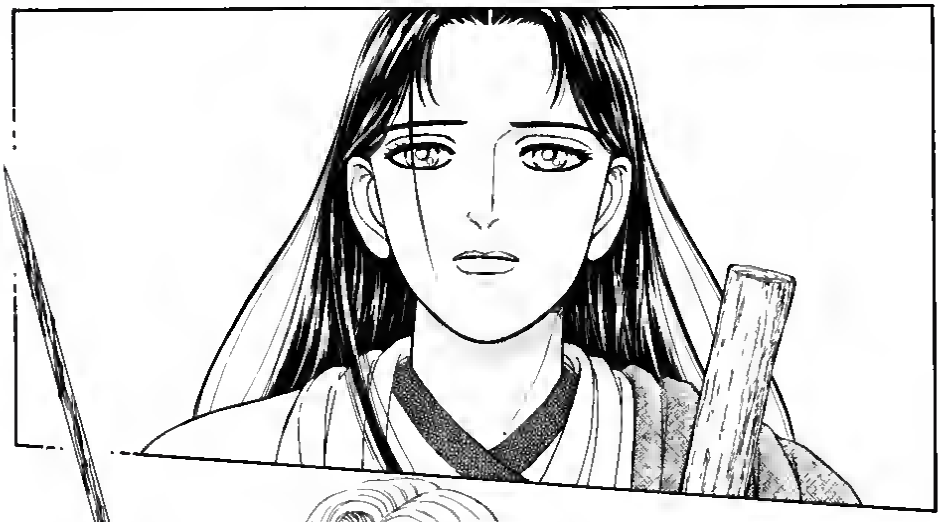
HAA
ハア
SIGH...
DAZE...
ぼうっ
Hey! Kai!
Hurry and get ready if you want to come with us!
What's up?
You not feeling well?
Lord Risson...

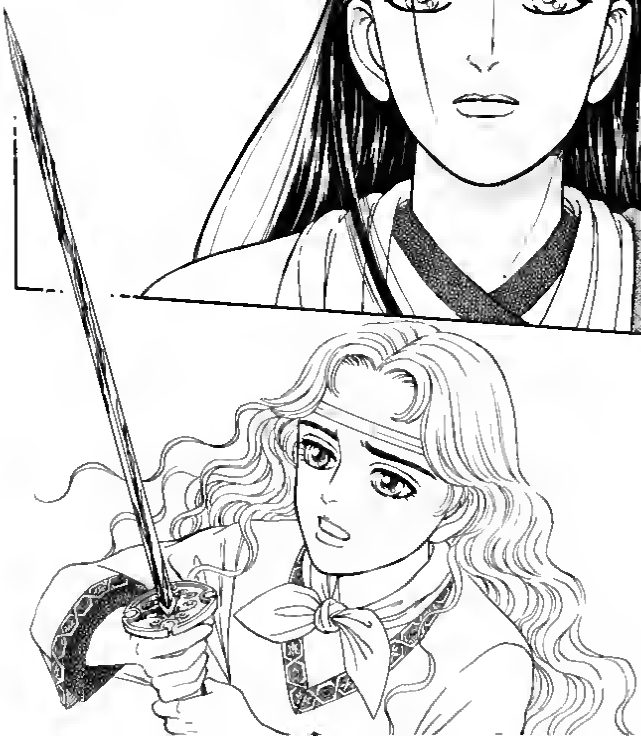

I'd heard demigods were b-beautiful...
...but that... was my first time seeing one...
They're really... nothing like humans, are they...?
What did you expect!?
If Kyoji saw Lord Risson, he'd totally switch sides.
Who's "Kyoji"?
This guy who looks like a huge, ferocious, hideous monster but has a weakness for pretty things.
I remember now... there was a conspicuously large man...
Anyway, he's a weird guy who loves anything that's pretty.


Whatever he can lay his hands on
Your face too.
If he saw your wings, he'd want them.
Ha! Whatever he can lay his hands on!
Anything? Whether it's a person or a thing?
...anyone who would want to devote himself body and soul to a god with such a beautiful form.
Ah... But honestly...
She sure is...
Yoko isn't the only one he's worried
And Yoko's a tough girl.
She's fine! Kyoji just looks at things he admires... Never touches them.
Hey... Are you worried about Yoko?

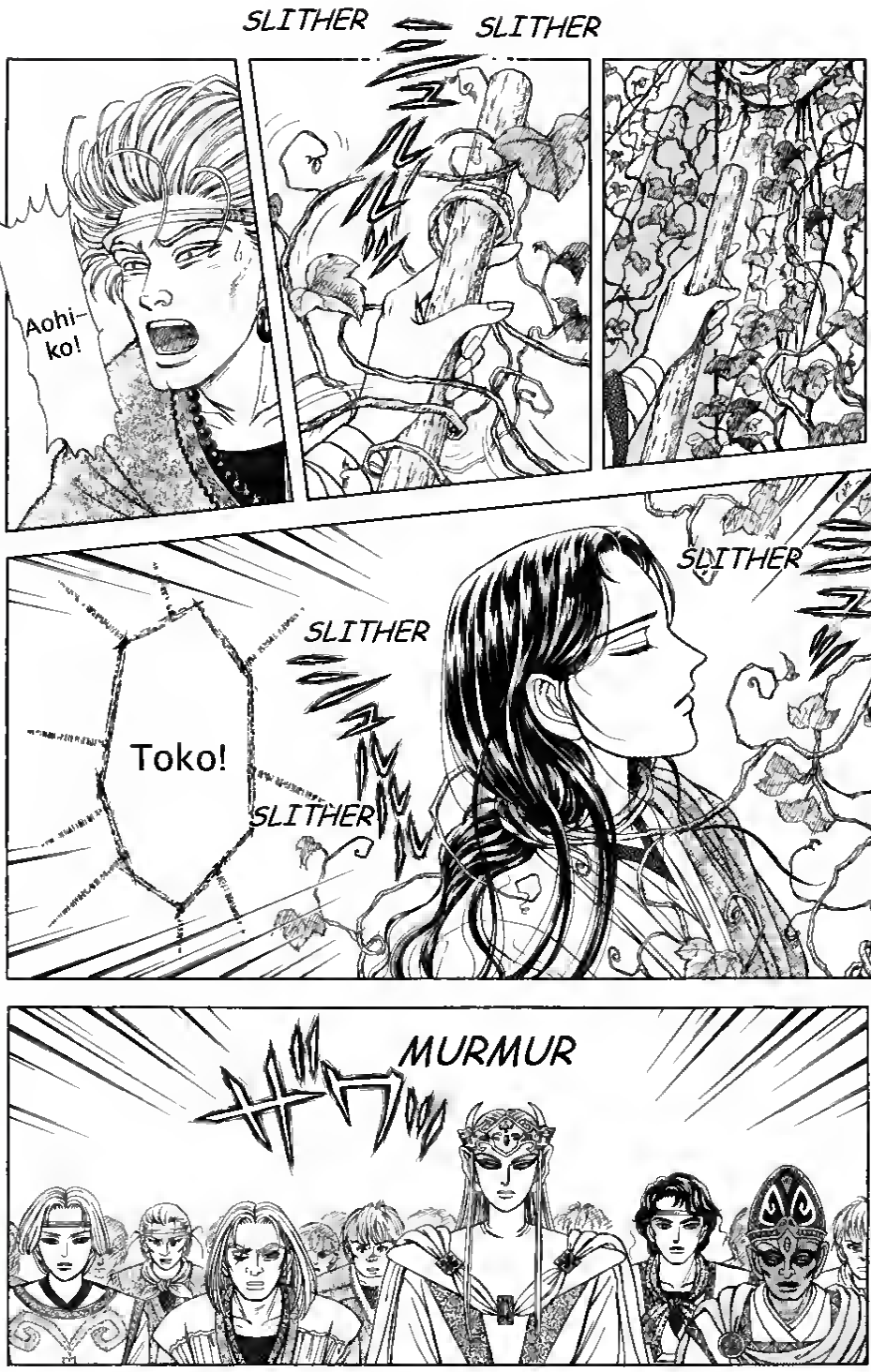
A-are you okay? Aohiko ...
I've been worried sick about you...
I'm so sorry. It still hurts, doesn't it?
I'll take it from here... Stand back.
Ohh... He's so pretty...
I'm glad to see you walking again...
Thanks to you, Aohiko.

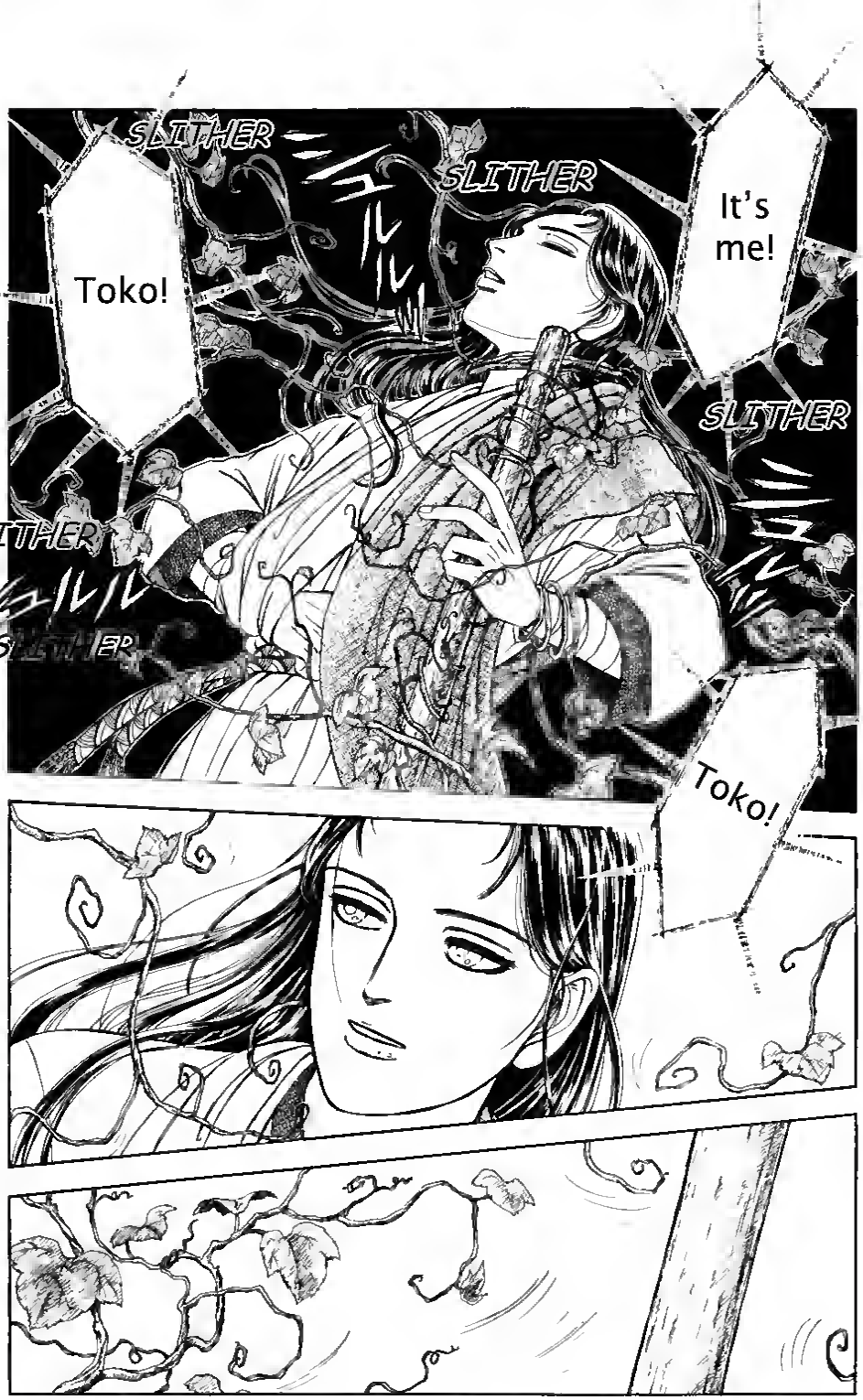


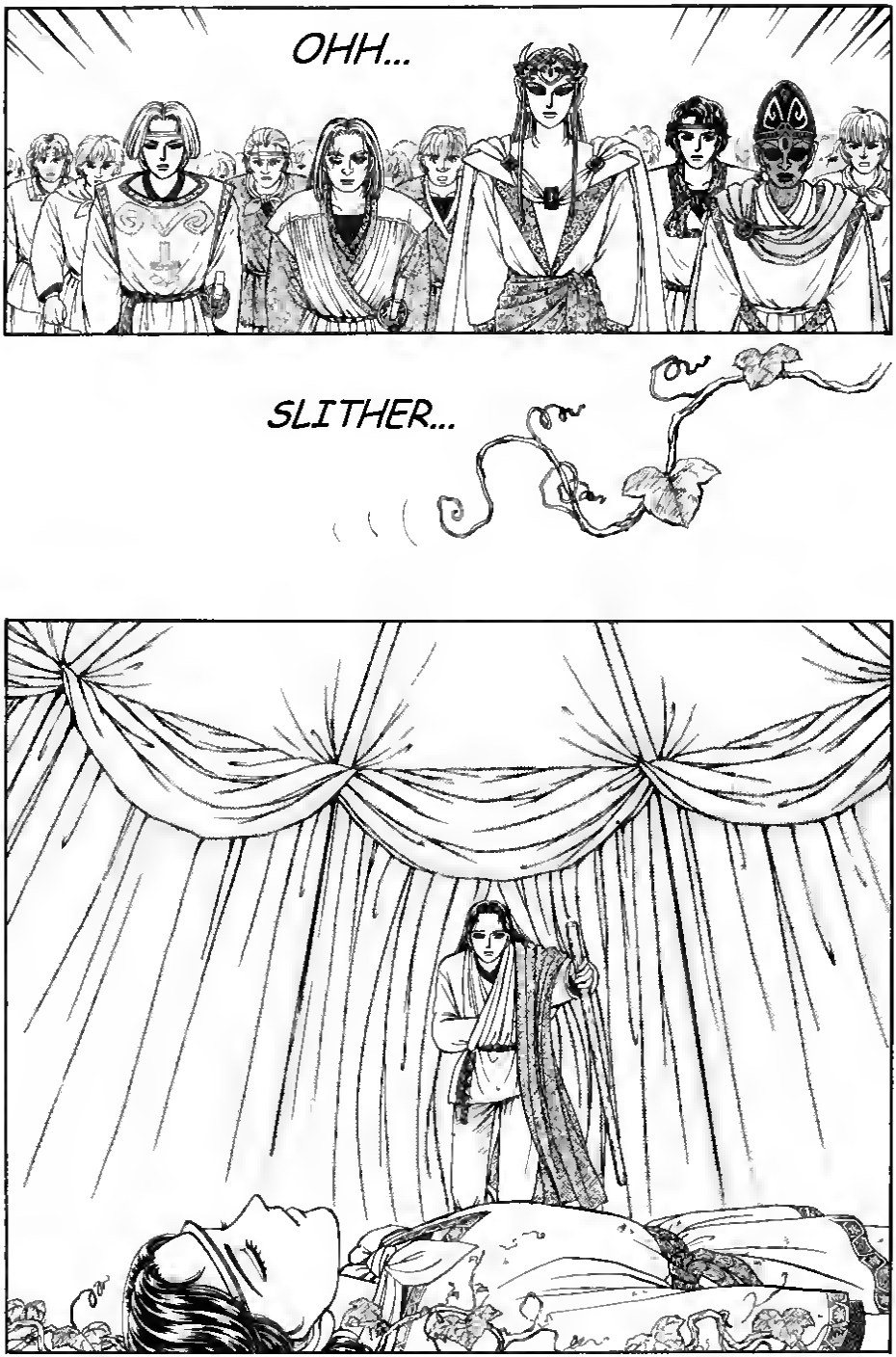




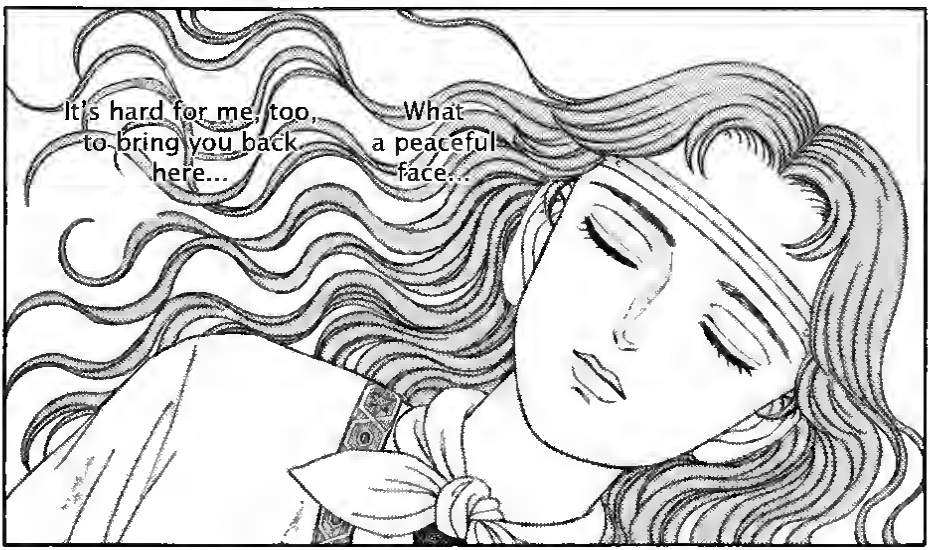
Toko...


SLITHER
SLITHER
Aohi-ko!
SLITHER
SLITHER
Toko!
SLITHER
MURMUR


SLITHER
SLITHER
Toko!
It's me!
SLITHER
SLITHER
SLITHER
Toko!


OHH...
SLITHER...

Toko...


It's hard for me, too, to bring you back here...
What a peaceful face...

Nothing exists there but illusions...

BEHEEOK
BEHEEOK
BEHEEOK
BEHEEOK
BEHEEOK
BEHEEOK
BEHEEOK
I know the comfort of that darkness...
A dream-filled darkness...
But Toko...
I'm well aware of how sweet the dark void must seem to you...
Toko...

Toko!

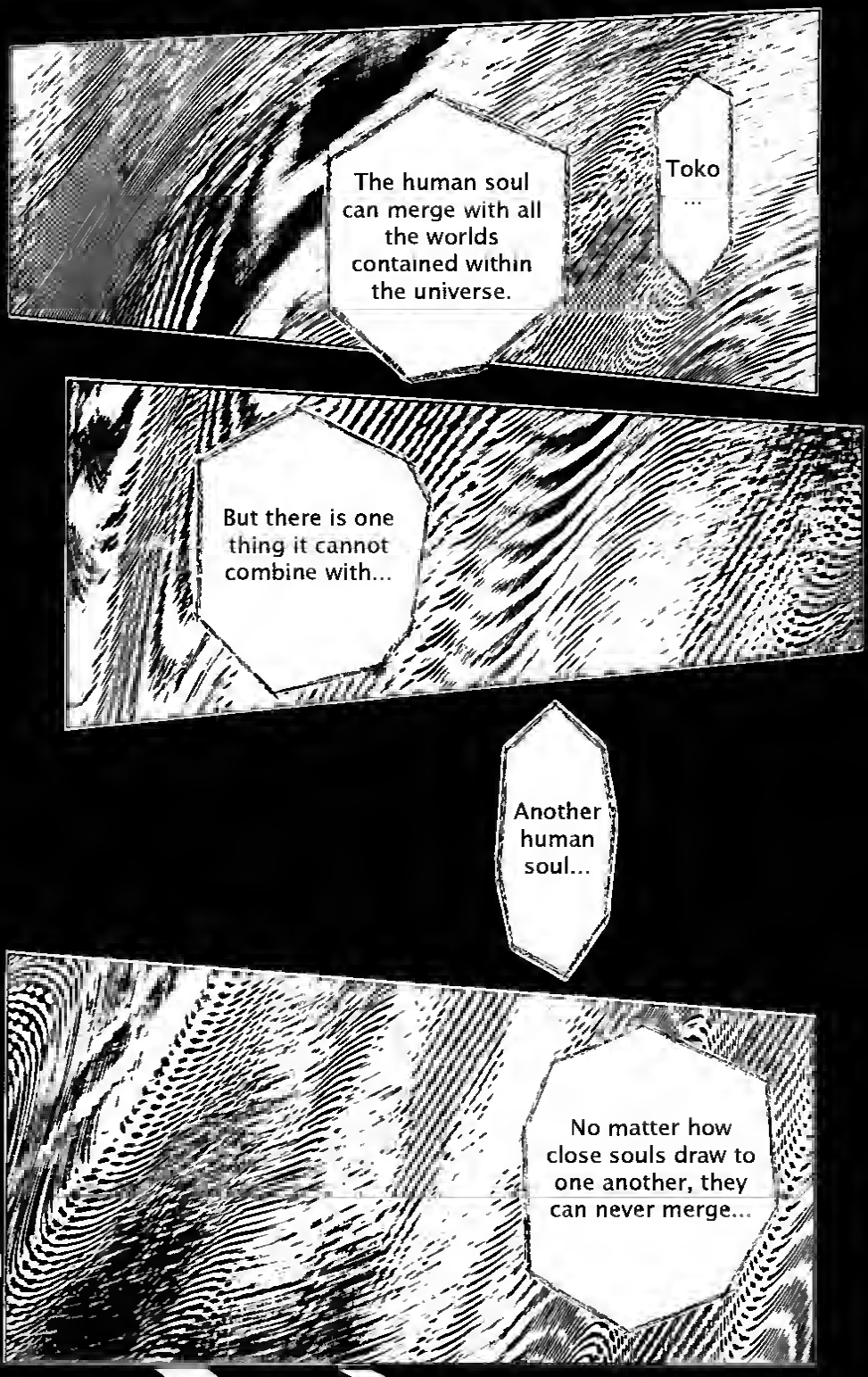
Toko!
Ao...
hiko...

Come out... Toko...
I can't even hug you when you're in there.
I can't ...
Toko ...

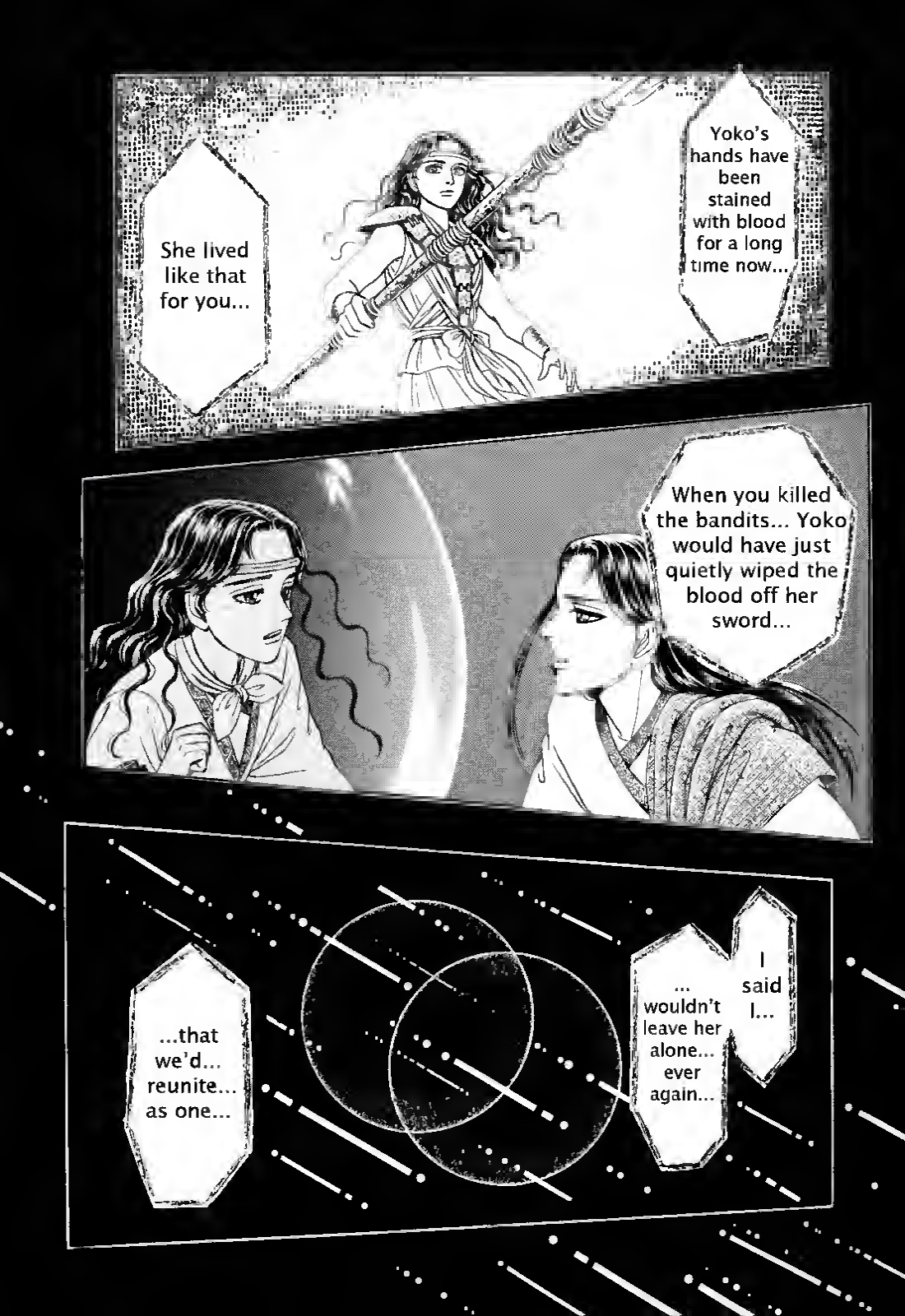
I can't get out...
You are the only one who can destroy it...
This was created by your own thoughts.
When I'm here, I don't feel sad...
I want to stay here until Takaya finds me..
I...
... want to stay here.

This is your own world...
Takaya can't find you if you stay here...
Takaya will find me.
He'll find me no matter where I am.
Toko!
Toko! Listen to me!
No...

No
...
Don't depend on Takaya!
Detach yourself from him!
No!
...and lock yourself in here.
You're trying to lock Yoko's soul inside you...
...
ko?
Yo...
She wouldn't wait for Takaya here.
Yoko would never retreat here.


The human soul can merge with all the worlds contained within the universe.
Toko ...
But there is one thing it cannot combine with...
Another human soul...
No matter how close souls draw to one another, they can never merge...

But Yoko and I...
But...
So, Toko...
You've only inherited Yoko's memories.
...people are in truth alone from birth until death.
...or that you might kill more people in the future.
That's why you couldn't handle the fact that you had killed people with your own hands...


She lived like that for you...
Yoko's hands have been stained with blood for a long time now...
When you killed the bandits... Yoko would have just quietly wiped the blood off her sword...
...that we'd... reunite... as one...
... wouldn't leave her alone... ever again...
I said I...

So despite all that, I've locked away Yoko's soul!?
I meant for us to become one...
Your feelings for Takaya drove you to it...
You wanted to remain Toko.
...killed people... lived a bloody life... just for me...
Even though Yoko did that for me...
...I...

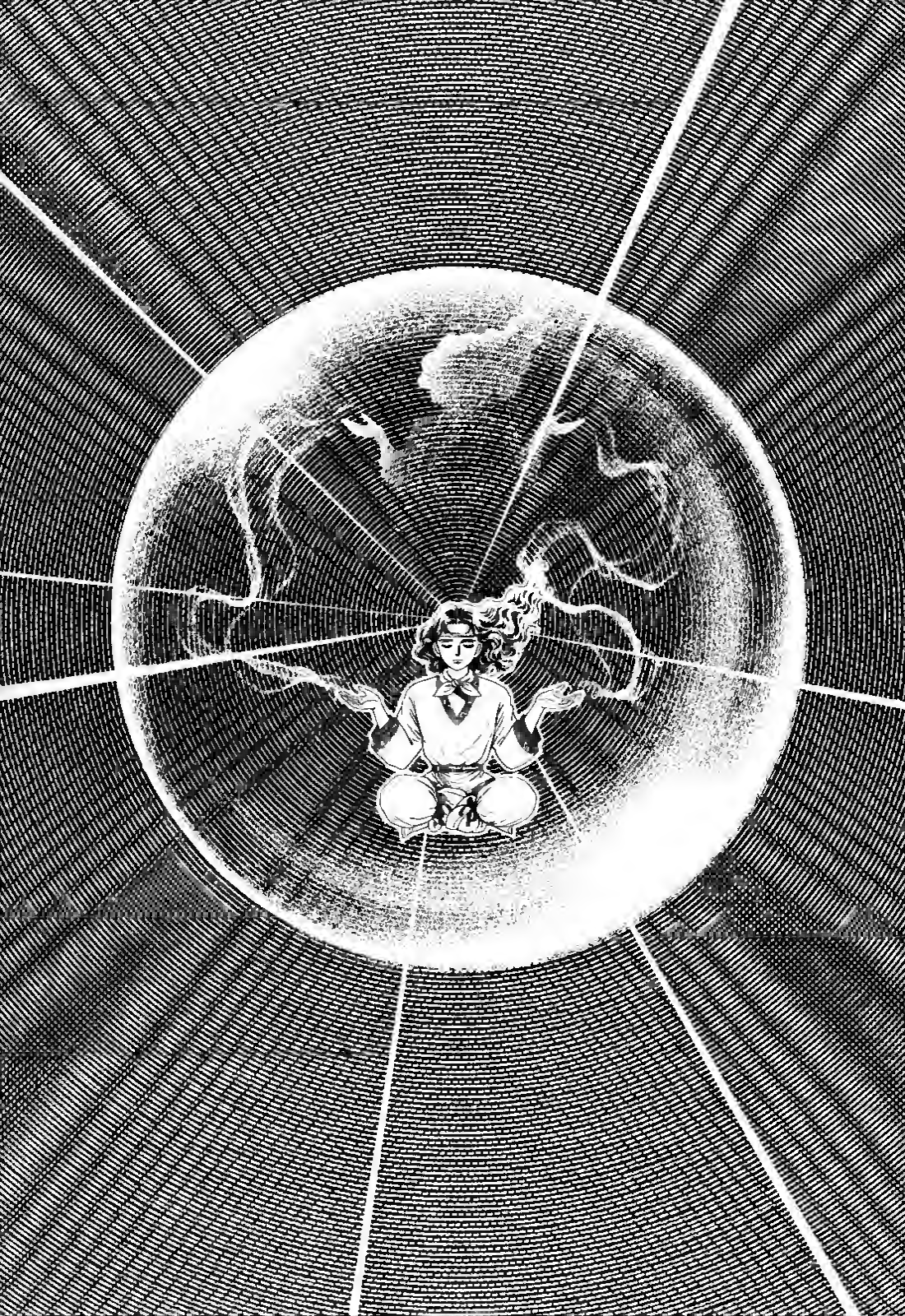
...and this was the result...
...it was hard for Yoko to remain Yoko...
You wanted to remain Toko...
Don't blame yourself.
It's okay, Toko...
But you mustn't stay here...
Go out and give Yoko the life she wanted, at the very least...
No!
...

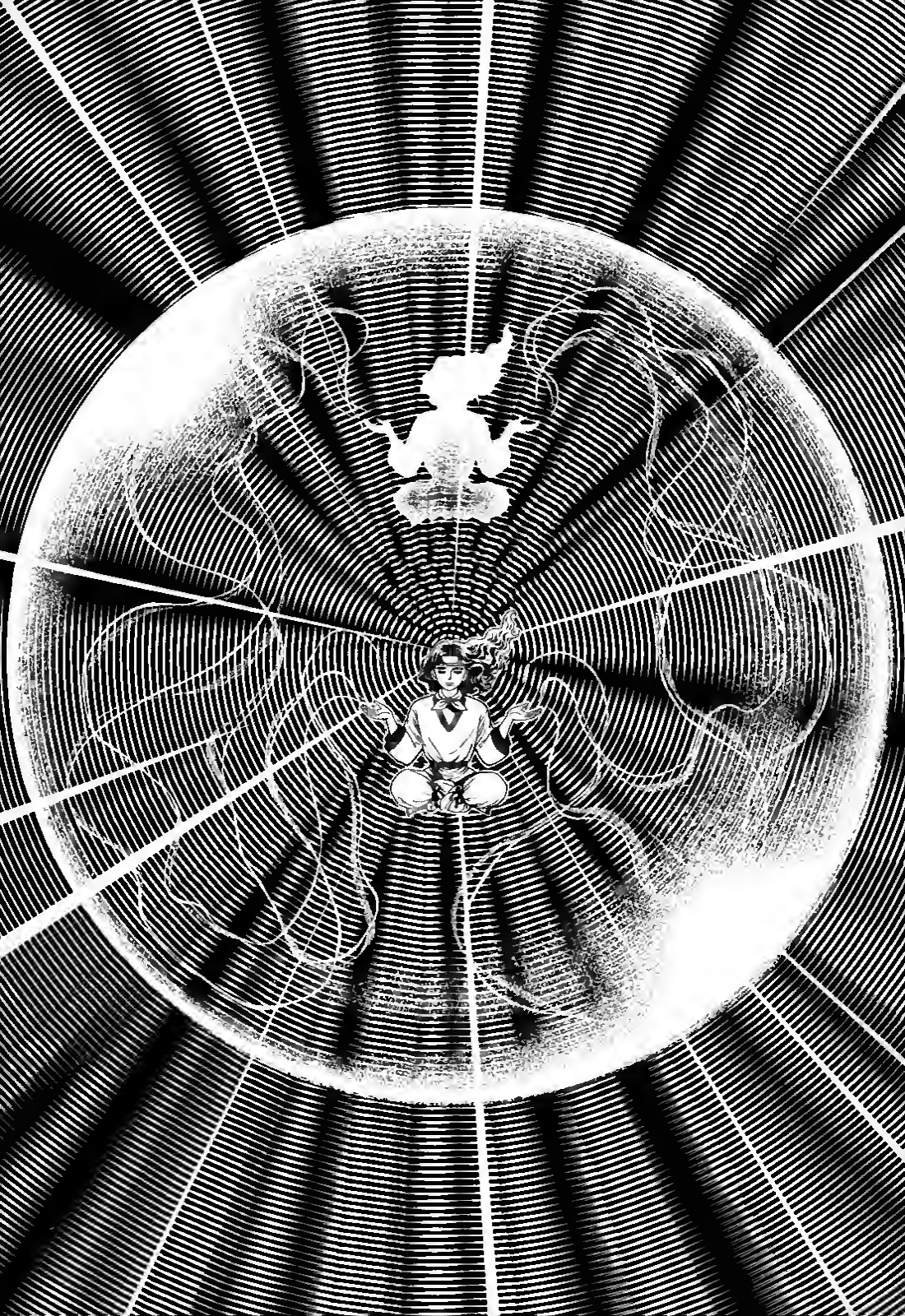
I'll set Yoko free.
That's not enough...
I'll truly become one with Yoko.
I'll accept everything about her...

...
You may become someone Takaya doesn't know...
You may become someone who is neither Toko nor Yoko.
Yes...
...but I have to do it...

And then I'll meet Takaya...
I'll meet him for the first time...
Toko...
I trust Takaya...
...

I'll be the first person to hug you.
Hurry then ...
...and come out.
Yoko...
Yoko ...
Yoko!





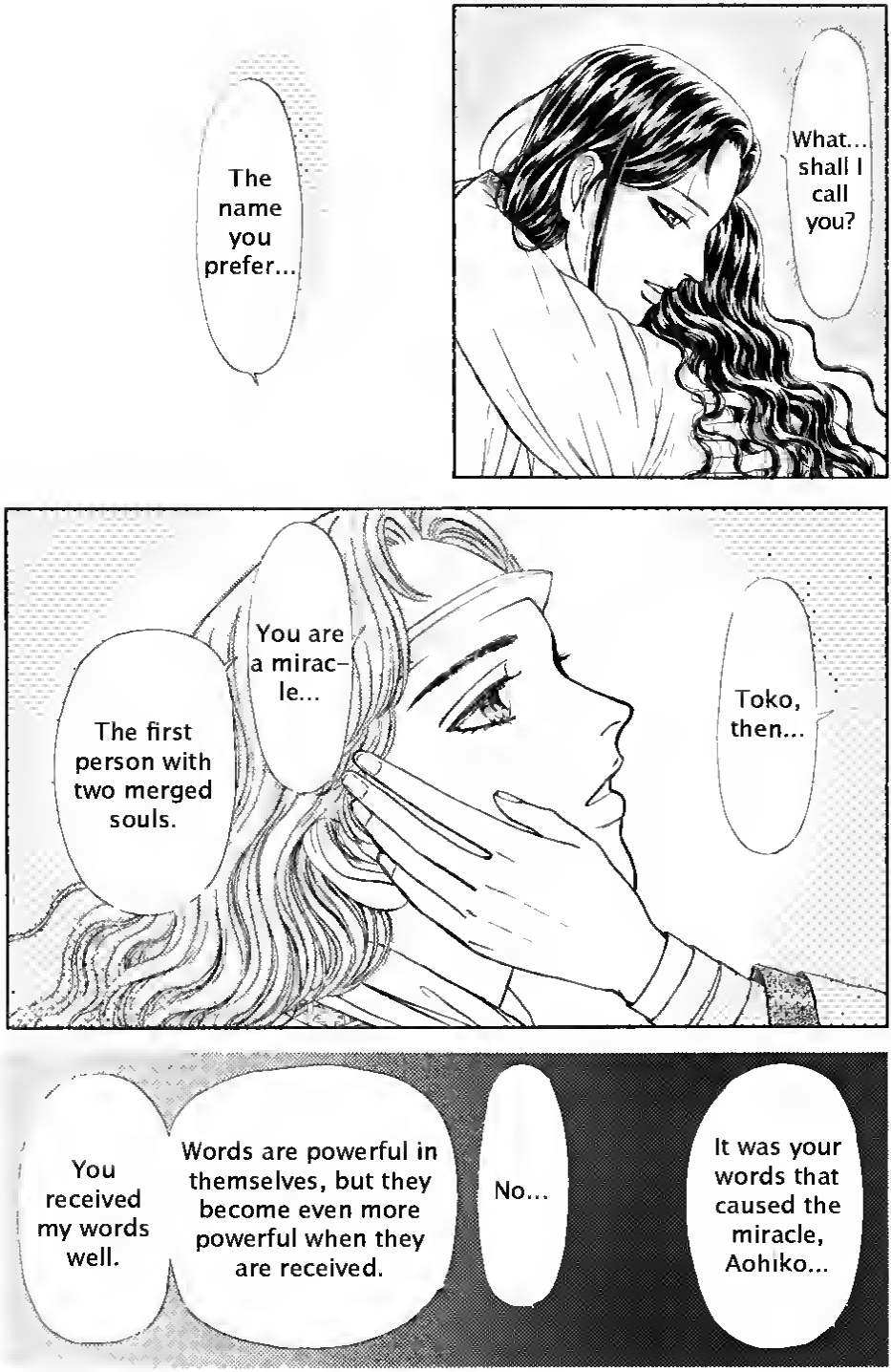
BWOOF...

...people are in truth alone
from birth until death.

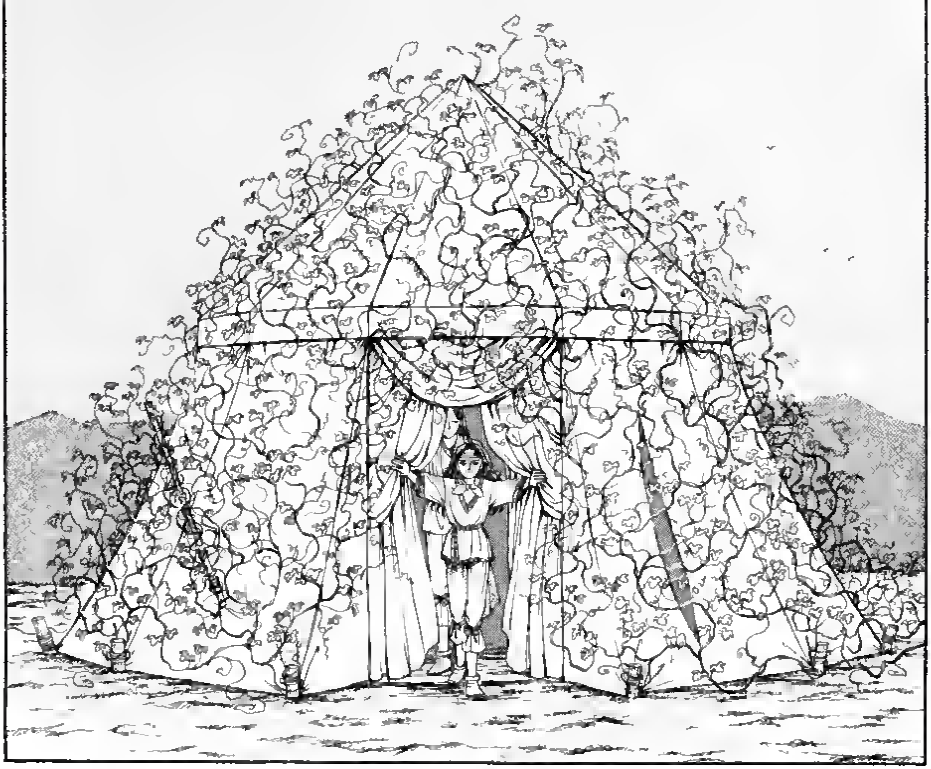
So, Toko...

I'm... alone
now...

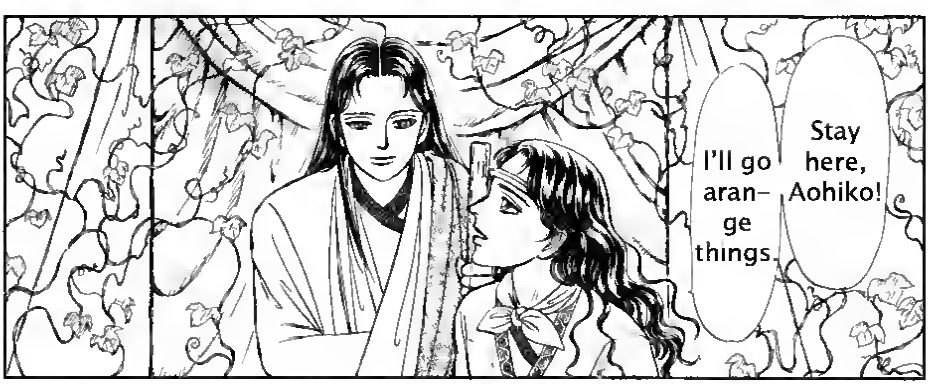
I've been controlled by a demon headband, sought pleasure, and killed people...
My hands are stained with blood...
Will you still... hug me?

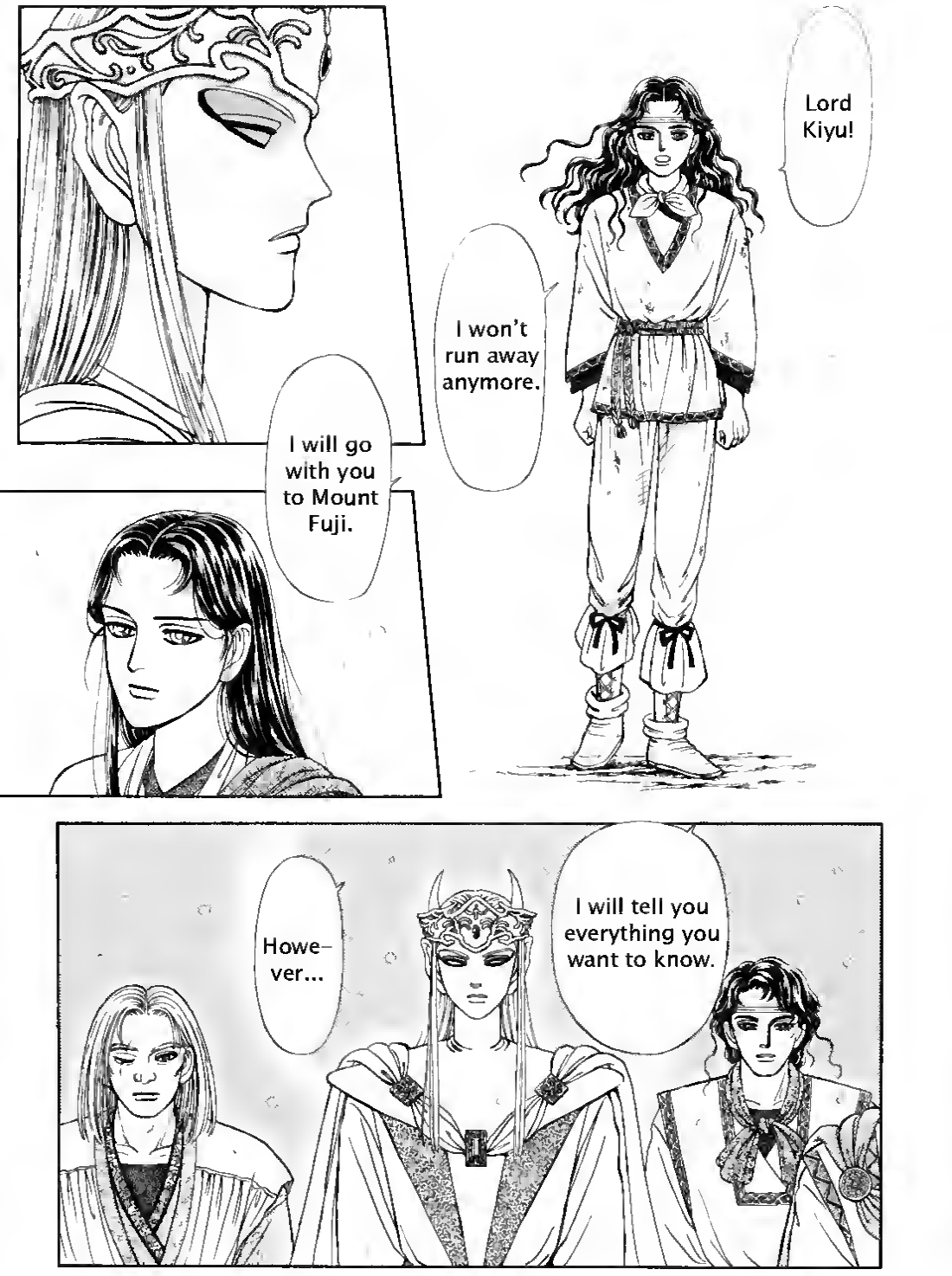

The name you prefer...
What... shall I call you?
You are a miracle...
The first person with two merged souls.
Toko, then...
You received my words well.
Words are powerful in themselves, but they become even more powerful when they are received.
No...
It was your words that caused the miracle, Aohiko...

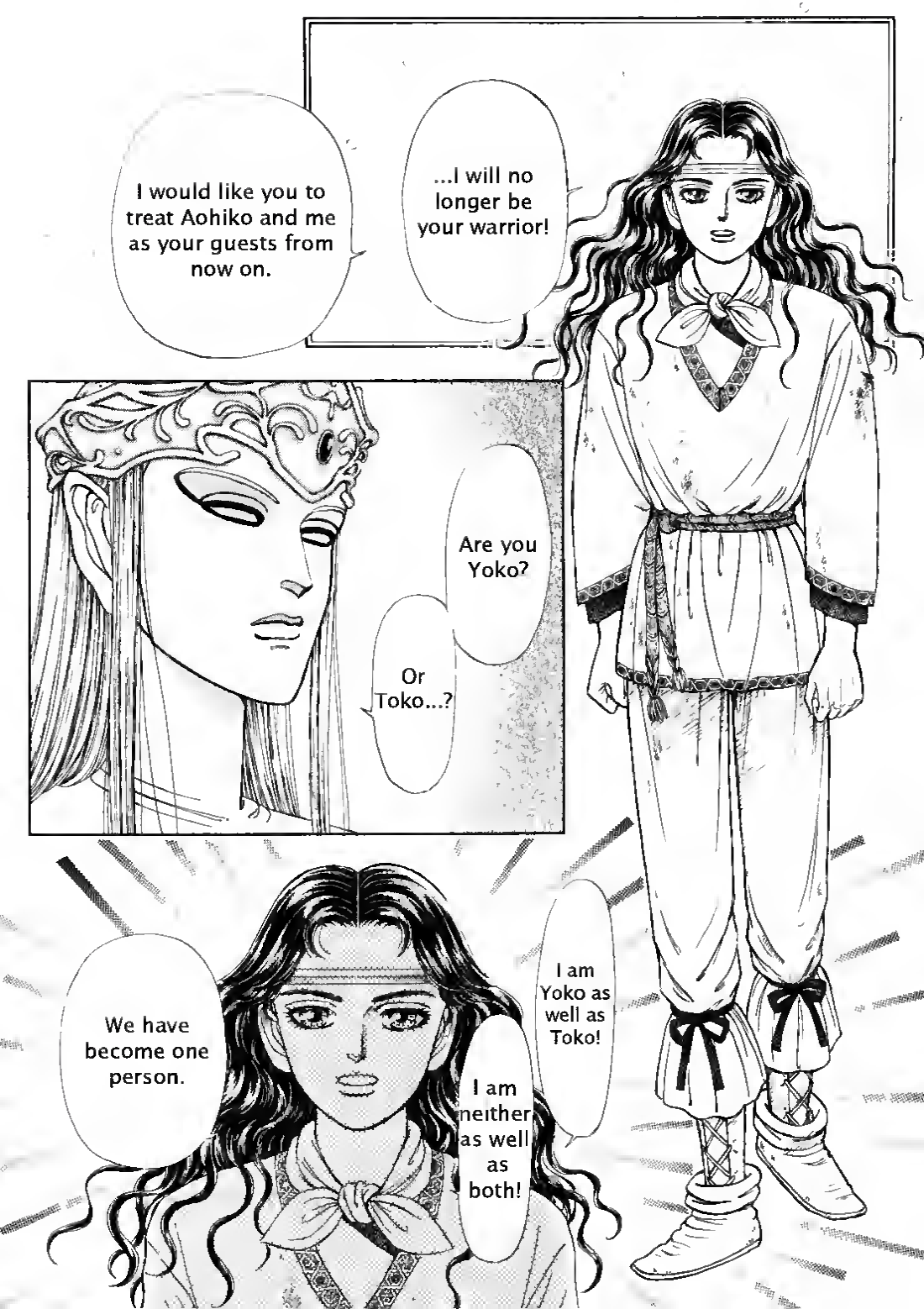
Hibiki, right!?
Hibiki beat you up, didn't he?
The demon gods saved my life for the second time...
I'm pretty lucky it's not worse.
A-Aohi-ko...
You're injured?
I'm in a situation where I could be killed at any time. Don't get angry at anyone.
She's starting to sound like Ka-tsura...
I'll protect you no matter what!
I'll never let you suffer like this again!
I'll protect you!

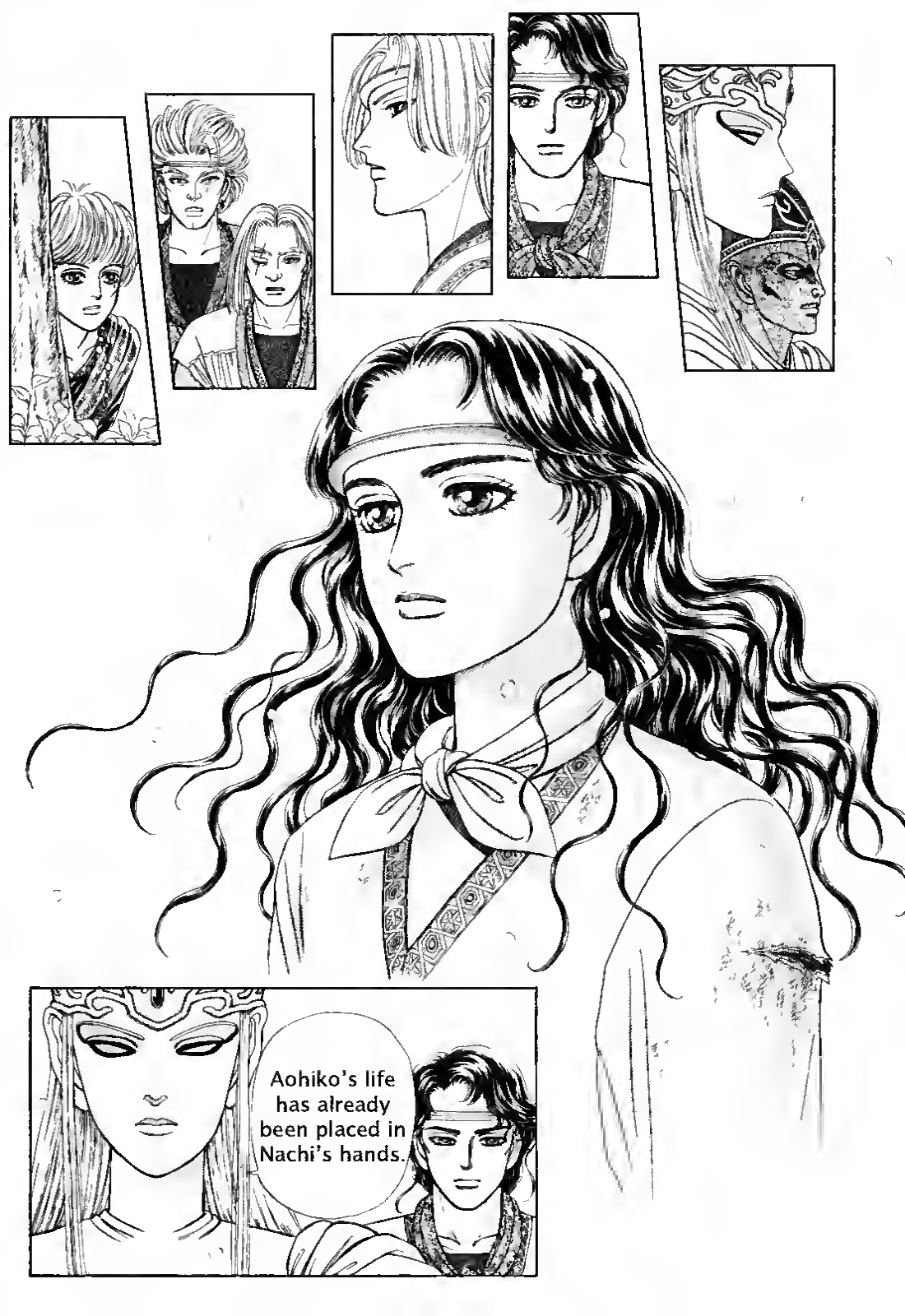


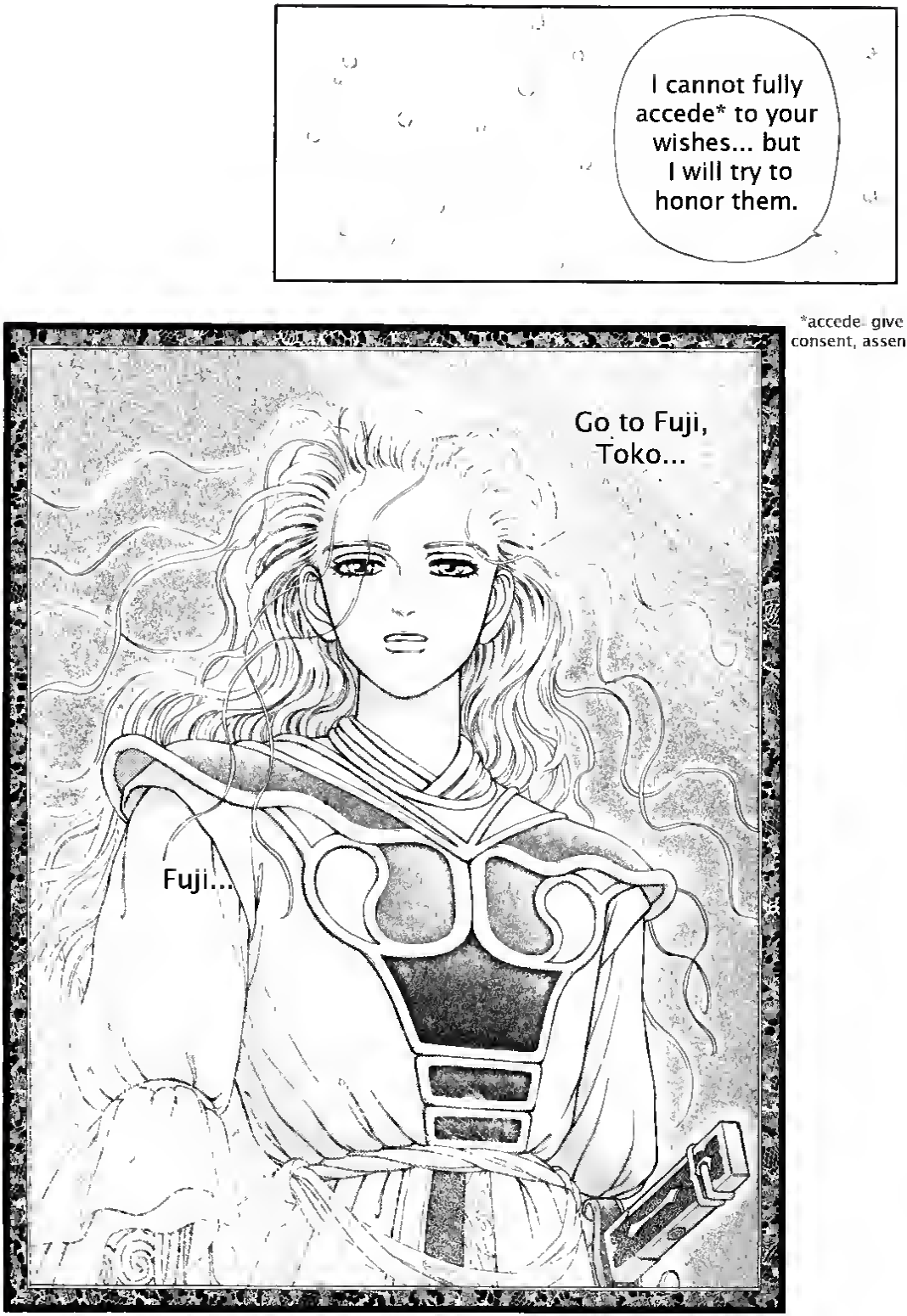
She's come out!


Stay here, Aohiko!
I'll go aran-ge things.


Lord Kiyu!
I won't run away anymore.
I will go with you to Mount Fuji.
Howe-ver...
I will tell you everything you want to know.


I would like you to treat Aohiko and me as your guests from now on.
...I will no longer be your warrior!
Are you Yoko?
Or Toko...?
We have become one person.
I am neither as well as both!
I am Yoko as well as Toko!


Aohiko's life has already been placed in Nachi's hands.



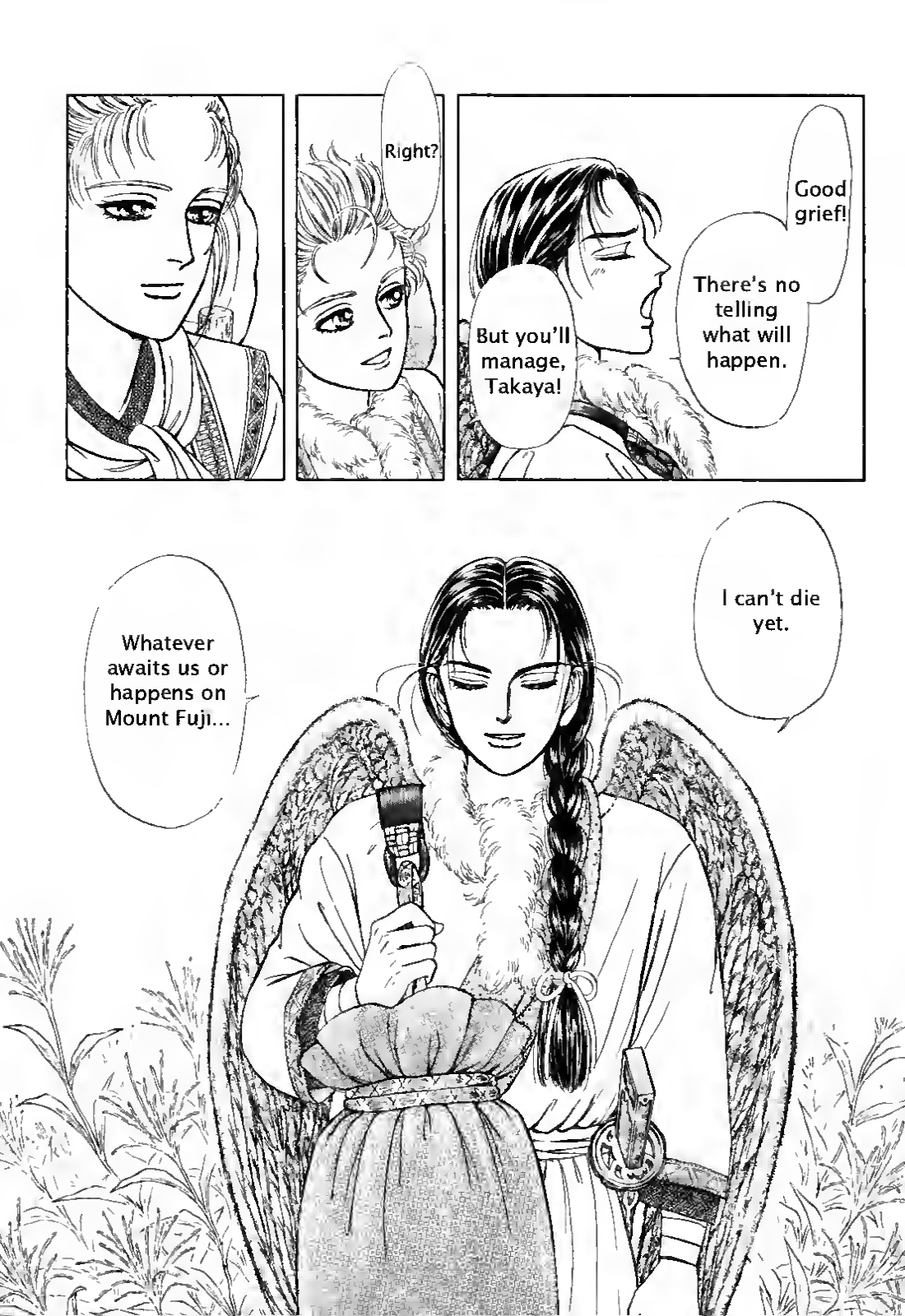
*accede: give consent, assent

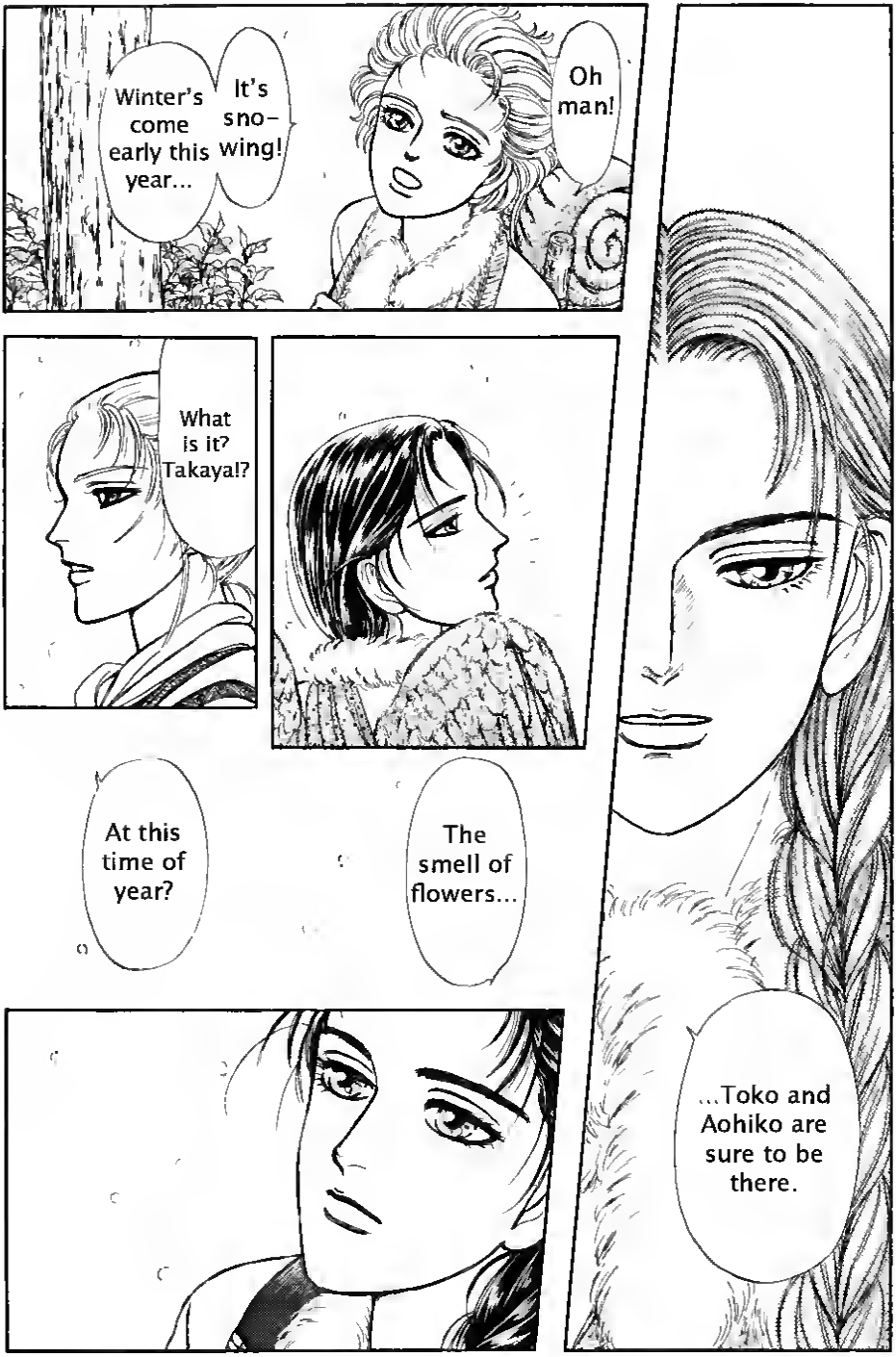
If I go to Fuji,
I can meet Takaya...

Takaya is headed
there too!

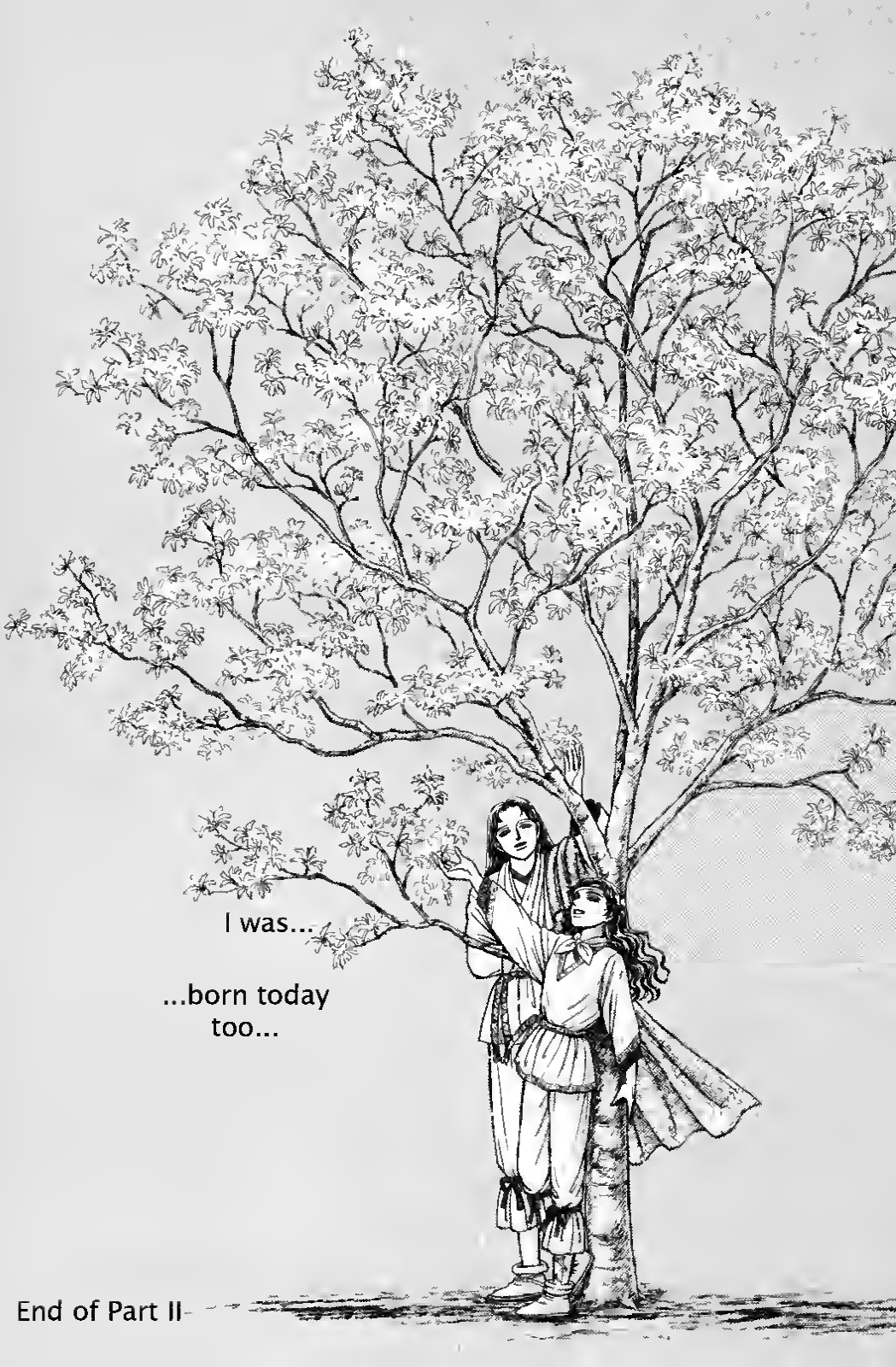
Misen, take good care of yourself.
My body seems to have adapted for easier flying.
You've lost weight.
Taka-ya...

HEHEHE
Wow, just picture it!
Enough with the bad jokes.
I wonder if you'll eventually grow a beak...
Don't even!
Don't worry. Toko will recognize you. Even if you grow a beak.
No one's gro-wing any beaks!
Toko's going to be surprised when she sees me.


Right?
Good grief!
There's no telling what will happen.
But you'll manage, Takaya!
I can't die yet.
Whatever awaits us or happens on Mount Fuji...


Winter's come early this year...
It's sno-wing!
Oh man!
What is it? Takaya!?
At this time of year?
The smell of flowers...
...Toko and Aohiko are sure to be there.

Takaya! Happy birthday!



End of Part II

Itihasa 7

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